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THE CHINESE COMMUNIST
REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND
THE LAND PROBLEM, 1921-1927

K. C. Yeh

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PREFACE

In recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of understanding Communist China's revolutionary struggle in the pre-1949 years, not only because of its wide appeal as a model of the people's war for the emerging nations, but also because the outlook, character, and behavior of the current leadership in Communist China are deeply rooted in the experience of its past. Of great significance is the relationship between the Party and the peasantry. According to Lin Piao, the strategy that brought the Chinese Communist Party to power can be summarized as follows: "To rely on the peasants, to establish rural bases, to encircle the cities, and finally to seize the cities."¹ The important role of the peasants in the strategy of the people's war can perhaps be easily understood. The Chinese economy was predominantly agricultural. "The primary source of military manpower was the peasants. The financial and material resources for a protracted war came primarily from the peasants."² But the crucial question is: just how did the Party gain the mass peasant support? To this question, Mao was reported to have provided a simple answer: "Whoever wins the peasants will win China. Whoever solves the land question will win the peasants."³ Mao's formula for success, however, has been challenged by Chalmers Johnson who suggests that peasant nationalism, rather than land reform, was the key to the rise of Communist power.⁴ More interestingly, it was not until the Party gained complete control of the mainland that it carried out a land reform program covering the majority of the peasants. One possible explanation of the seemingly contradictory observations is that the relative

¹Lin Piao, "Long Live the People's War!" Hung-chi (Red Flag), No. 10, 1965, p. 9.

²Ibid.

³Edgar Snow, The Other Side of the River, Random House, New York, 1961, p. 70.

⁴Chalmers Johnson, Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1962.

impact of different mobilizing appeals, as well as the specific forms of the Communist land policy, varied significantly from period to period and from place to place. The essential point is that land reform from the Communist standpoint was basically a tactical weapon. Its focus, methods, and nature must vary with the requirements and setting of the problem on hand. The Communist struggle had been a long and hard one, lasting for almost three decades and shifting from one base to another. It would not be surprising that the Party adopted different land policies in the different phases of development with varying degrees of success. Thus far, there has been little systematic analysis of the doctrine and practice of land reform as a tactical measure, its relation to the Party's goals, the political and economic constraints in the specific locality of the Communist base, and its effectiveness in enlisting peasant support. The present Memorandum is the first part of a larger study that will attempt to fill some gaps in this respect.

The larger study consists of three parts. The first deals with the political origin and background of Mao's doctrine of land reform. The second examines the land tenure system and its relation to productivity, income distribution, and the peasants' attitudes toward the Communist movement. The third is concerned with the specific land reform programs in the Kiangsi and Yenan periods.

The author is greatly indebted to Rand colleagues Daniel Ellsberg and Alice Hsieh for their very helpful comments.

SUMMARY

During the period 1921-1927, two major political developments shaped the Communist revolutionary strategy and the course of the Communist movement: The dominant influence of the Soviet Union over the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the rising peasant movements. The basic objective of the Soviet leaders was to secure a firm base in China and to check the expanding Western and Japanese influence in this area. Their immediate task was to create a united China closely tied to, if not directly controlled by, the Soviet Union. However, in selecting a potential ally, they faced the dilemma of either supporting the KMT, an established non-Communist political force with considerable popular support, or supporting the CCP, a member of the Communist International, but still an infant at this stage. The former choice would be in the interest of the Soviet Union, and the latter in the interest of the world Communist movement. The Russians decided to take the first course while holding onto the second. They spared no effort in developing the military power of the KMT. At the same time they directed the CCP to merge with the KMT, and to expand its power by subverting the KMT and by organizing the workers and peasants. At a later stage, as the Party grew in strength, the CCP was to seize power from the KMT. Accordingly the CCP formed a coalition with the KMT, and the policy of simultaneous revolution from above and below became the dominant Communist strategy for the period.

Partly as the result of the Soviet military aid program, The First Army of the KMT soon developed into the most powerful military force in China. But the very success of the Soviet policy toward the KMT undermined its own plans for the Communist movement. Contrary to Soviet expectations, the military force under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek became increasingly independent of the Soviet influence and inimical toward the CCP. Meanwhile the Communists demonstrated their great skill in political subversion by moving rapidly into the power hierarchy of the KMT. The conflict between the two new forces split the KMT into the Nanking regime, headed by Chiang, and the Wuhan regime, headed by the KMT Left and supported by the Communists.

During this period agrarian unrest and peasant movements were found in many parts of China. Apparently, the peasant movement grew out of the peasants' need for a countervailing organization in the face of political and economic oppression by other groups. Rough statistical tests show that tenant farmers had a higher propensity to join the movement than owner-operators. To a considerable extent, the peasant movement was a spontaneous development largely independent of the Communist movement. The Central Committee of the CCP were preoccupied with labor movements and did not actively support or direct the peasant movement. They had no peasant policy other than a few slogans and manifestos, much less a specific land reform program. Nonetheless, the lower level cadres did play an important catalytic role in initiating the movement in many localities. After the KMT captured Wuhan, the surging peasant movements in Hunan and Hupeh brought the land problem into sharp focus and led to serious disputes over the Communist revolutionary strategy between Mao and other Chinese Communist leaders within the CCP, between the two Soviet advisers, Roy and Borodin, and between Trotsky and Stalin in Moscow. The key issue was whether or not the CCP should reorient their effort toward revolution from below by enlisting the peasant support with a radical land reform program, by establishing a soviet, and by organizing an independent military force. In essence, the CCP was forced to choose between supporting the Wuhan KMT whose generals and soldiers sided with the landlords, and supporting the peasants who demanded land redistribution. At Stalin's insistence, the Party attempted to preserve the KMT-CCP coalition and suppress the peasants. But the rift between the army of the Wuhan regime and the peasantry was beyond repair and eventually brought on the collapse of the coalition.

Two elements from the Communist experience of the 1920s seemed to have strongly influenced Mao's strategic thinking in his subsequent struggle for power. The first was that, in a political environment like that of China in this period, to bring forth a revolution successfully would require three distinct but interrelated power bases: a disciplined party with its ideology, organization, and leadership; an independent army; and peasant support and participation. The KMT had both organization and an army, and thus had little difficulty in

eliminating the warlords who had only their armies, or in crushing the CCP who had only a strong organization and nothing more. The CCP thus far had failed mainly because it grossly neglected the power of the gun, and because it had virtually no support from the peasantry. Second, over the long run, the army and the peasants must be mutually supporting and not antagonistic toward each other. A dichotomy between the two was the fundamental weakness in the military power of the warlords and the Wuhan regime. Mao believed that the Communist Party, through land reform, could weld together the interests of the army and the majority of the peasants. In return for land redistributed by the Party, the peasants would support the revolutionary war with resources and manpower. The troops, drawn largely from the peasantry, would fight for the land they owned and for the group that had redressed their grievances and fulfilled their need for a stable and just local government. These, then, were some of the rudiments of Mao's strategy that emerged from the period 1921-1927. The strategy itself and the tactical use of land reform had yet to be tested and to evolve in the process of struggle.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study outlines the evolution of the Communist strategy during the period between the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 and Mao's retreat to Chingkanshan in 1927. The discussion focuses on three questions: What were the immediate goals, the major instruments, and tactics adopted by the Party in its quest for power during this phase of the Communist movement? What were the ideological origins and political background of the Party leaders' decisions? And, to what extent and in what manner were the peasantry and the land problem involved both as the basis and the consequence of these decisions?

In the history of the Chinese Communist movement, the 1920s were the formative years in which the Party leaders had just begun their struggle for power. The decisions they made were based on many elements, among which the peasantry and the land problem were often not the most significant. Nonetheless, the Party's policies as a whole are relevant here for several reasons. First, the lack of use or misuse of a land reform program in the Communist movement and the consequences are just as interesting as any positive land reform program itself. Second, Mao's grand strategy of agrarian-based, protracted armed conflict, of which the doctrine of land reform was an integral part, grew largely out of the revolutionary experience of 1921-1927. The political environment of the Kiangsi period (1928-1934), when the first land reform program was put into execution, was the direct aftermath of the dramatic events of the 1920s. Thus the Communist land program can perhaps be better understood when placed in historical perspective. Third, a study of the tactical use of land reform, and for that matter, of united front and other policy instruments, is essentially a study of the adaptive process by which the leaders adjust and apply their doctrine to the changing conditions. The vacillations in the Communist policies in response to the political upheavals during this period provide some illustrations of the interactions between Communist doctrine and practice.

The political situation during this period was highly complex, and much of what happened remains obscure.¹ There were civil wars and shifting alignments among the warlords, intriguing maneuvers by the Nationalists and the Communists, and constant interventions into Chinese politics by the foreign powers. For the present purpose I shall take up only the major developments that directly affected the evolution of the Communist strategy. Two such events are of particular interest. The first was the dominating influence of the Soviet Union on the CCP which resulted in the coalition of the CCP and the KMT. The second was the growing agrarian unrest which gave rise to peasant movements. Section II traces the development of the revolutionary strategy during 1921-1926, focusing on the CCP-KMT coalition. Section III discusses the nature and causes of the peasant movements. Section IV examines the intra- and inter-party disputes over the land problem and describes how the dichotomy between the political and military power within the KMT and the rampant peasant movements finally brought the coalition to its collapse in 1927. A brief summary is given in the last section.

¹There is abundant literature on the history of this period. To cite only a few, there are general works such as Li, 1947; Wang, 1965; documentary studies such as Brandt et al., 1966; KMT, 1964; Wilbur and How, 1956; orthodox Communist histories such as Ho, 1959; Hu, 1952; studies by non-Communist historians such as Schwartz, 1951; Kuo, 1965; treatise on the CCP-KMT coalition and the role of Soviet representatives by Li, 1966; Chiang, 1963; Whiting, 1954; and North and Eudin, 1963. See List of References for full citations.

II. THE DUAL STRATEGY OF REVOLUTION SIMULTANEOUSLY
FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

FROM MARXIAN ORTHODOXY TO COALITION, 1921-1924

At the first National Congress of the CCP in July 1921, the Party adopted a revolutionary strategy that was strikingly orthodox in its Marxian orientation. The strategy had two distinctive features.¹ First, it relied heavily on labor organizations as the major source of power. The main task the Party set itself was to organize and educate the workers in order to develop a power base for the Party. The rationale of this policy seemed to have stemmed directly from the Marxist doctrine of the class struggle. In terms of this doctrine, a revolution is nothing more than a struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The revolution in China should be no exception. Since the proletariat was the principal force of the revolution and since the CCP was the party of the proletariat, the primary task of the

¹ The essential elements of the first revolutionary strategy are found in the two documents of the First National Congress: "The Program of the Chinese Communist Party," and "Resolution on the Goals of the Chinese Communist Party," given in Ch'en, 1924. The terms "leaders" and "Party" are used here to represent a decisionmaking group. The ideas and outlooks of the members of this group were not necessarily unanimous. More often than not, their views differed sharply. This was apparently the case with the policy decision at the First Congress. One group, headed by Li Han-tsin, proposed a prolonged campaign of propaganda and education. He insisted that the primary task of the Party was to organize student movements. He opposed a political system based on proletarian dictatorship and believed that the Party should support Sun Yat-sen. Li Ta and Ch'en Kung-po were of the same opinion. At the other extreme Liu Jen-ching wanted to commit the Party immediately to seizing power by force. Pac Huei-cheng supported his position. Others apparently took the middle road. For fragmentary records of what happened at the First Congress see: Ch'en Kung-po, "The Chinese Communist Party and I," in Hang-fung-chih (The Chilly Wind: A Collection of Papers), Shanghai, 1945, reprinted in Ch'en and Chou, 1967, pp. 1-89; Chou Fu-hai, "Escape from Wu-han," reprinted in Ch'en and Chou, 1966, pp. 137-177; Ch'en T'an-chiu, "Reminiscences of the First Congress of the Communist Party of China," The Communist International, October 1939, pp. 1361-1363; Tung Pi-wu, "Vignettes on the CCP Before and After Its Founding," reprinted in Kuo, 1966, pp. 336-345; Chang Kuo-t'ao, "My Memoirs," Ming-pao yueh-kan, Hong Kong, No. 6, June 1966, pp. 62-67; "A Brief History of the Chinese Communist Party," in Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 52-54.

Party was to organize strong labor movements, to overthrow the capitalists, and eventually to abolish classes.

The second notable feature of the Party's decision is its strong stand against collaborating with other political groups. Its resolution explicitly stated that "an attitude of independence, aggression, and exclusion should be adopted toward the existing political parties."¹ Again, this sectarian policy apparently was based on the Marxian concept that a political party is simply a superstructure concentrating the political power of a single, indivisible economic class. The Communist Party being the only party that fought for the class interest of the proletariat, there seemed to be no reason for the Party to associate itself with other political parties in the revolutionary struggle.

The preponderant influence of Marxist dogma on the leaders' revolutionary outlook should not be surprising. By and large, the leaders came from the upper layer of the society and the majority of them were intellectuals.² As elites in the society, they were far removed from, and had little understanding of, the social and economic realities of the workers and the peasants in China. As Chinese intellectuals their training was in the fields of philosophy and fine arts rather than in dealing with problems of revolution.³ According to Chang Kuo-t'ao, they had no detailed knowledge of the guiding principles laid down by the Second World Congress of the Communist International.⁴ Nor did the Soviet representatives, Maring and Voitinsky, offer any concrete programs at the First CCP Congress. About the only blueprint accessible to them was orthodox Marxism, which they embraced without reservation.

Whatever the rationale for the labor-oriented policy, it is clear that the policy itself was highly unrealistic. In the first place,

¹Ch'en, 1924.

²For a discussion of the social characteristics of the Party leaders, see North, 1952, pp. 46-55, 116-120. See also Chang, 1966, p. 61; Snow, 1961, p. 69.

³Lee, 1946, pp. 492-493.

⁴Chang, 1966, p. 64.

the excessive emphasis on the urban proletariat was obviously misplaced. In the predominantly agrarian economy of China, the urban proletariat was but a tiny fraction of the total population. The peasants were by far the largest group. Mass support of the Communist movement could not truly be popular support unless a large section of the peasantry was involved. And yet, the leaders had totally neglected the role of the peasants. Second, the leaders had misjudged the nature of the power struggle in China. The bourgeoisie, like the workers they "exploited," were a minority in the society and had little political influence. The major political forces in China were the warlords -- the Chihli group under Wu Pei-fu, the Anhwei group under Tuan Chi-jui, the Fengtien group under Chang Tso-lin, and a dozen others in the South. Another important political group was the foreign powers who exerted strong influence over the political and economic affairs in China.¹ Yet the Party leaders at this stage had failed to take them into account.

The First Congress adopted the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party and elected a Central Committee of three members: Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Chang Kuo-t'ao, and Li Ta, with Ch'en as the general secretary. Immediately after the First Congress the leaders organized the Secretariat of the Chinese Labor Union in Shanghai to direct and promote labor movements. Their emphasis on labor organizations is indicated by the fact that more than half of the Party members worked for the Secretariat.² Other members were sent to the factories to set up schools and clubs for the workers. During its first two years the Party established a number of unions in the major cities of China, published many periodicals for the workers, and organized a series of strikes.³

¹ The foreign powers had complete jurisdiction over sixteen concessions and seven leased territories in China. In addition there were 108 treaty ports. Yen, 1955, pp. 41-56.

² Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 80.

³ In late 1922 more than 150,000 workers were organized into unions controlled by the CCP. Hu, 1952, p. 44. For activities of the Party in organizing labor movements, see Teng, 1949, and Labor Movements, 1954.

The period 1922-1923 witnessed the first revision of the CCP policy. At the time of the Second National Congress of the CCP, the leaders still persisted in their policy of concentrating on the labor movements.¹ However, two major changes in their revolutionary outlook were discernible. For the first time the leaders recognized the peasants as a major force in the revolutionary movement.² The ultimate goal of proletarian dictatorship now became dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants. The restatement of goals is, of course, a long way from a program of action, and even further from actual implementation.³ Yet in Communist practice, ideological sanction generally precedes a policy decision. Thus, the new orientation, albeit a minor element in the leaders' strategic thinking, is still pertinent, for it opened the way for subsequent activities in the peasant movements.

More important, the leaders had come to realize that the two primary enemies of the revolution were the warlords and the foreign powers, and that organizing labor movements alone was not an effective tactic to cope with them. According to Chang Kuo-t'ao and the Communist historians, the leaders' new outlook was strongly influenced by the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East which introduced the leaders to Lenin's theories concerning revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries.⁴ The Party had made little headway in the past year in becoming a strong, well-organized political force on the basis of labor unions, and this might also have been a major consideration. Despite some preliminary success in the labor movements since the First Congress, the influence of the Party on the workers was still quite limited and few workers had been absorbed into the Party.⁵ Meanwhile the unions

¹ Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 60.

² CCP, "Manifesto of the Second Party Congress," Wang, 1965, I, pp. 75-76.

³ Actually the CCP had no peasant program at this time. None of the nine resolutions on various tasks for the Party adopted by the Second Congress were on peasant movements. Wang, 1965, I, pp. 57-67.

⁴ Chang, 1966, 8, p. 74. Ho, 1959, pp. 44-45. For the documents of this Congress, see Eudin and North, 1957, pp. 221-231. See also discussions of Lenin's theses below.

⁵ Teng, 1949, p. 46.

were constantly harassed by the warlords and the foreign powers. To cope with the situation, the leaders were forced to reformulate their program.

In June 1922 the Party articulated the basic elements of a new strategy in its first manifesto on the political situation.¹ The leaders recognized that the revolution in China must go through a bourgeois-democratic revolution to achieve national unification and independence, and a proletarian revolution to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolution was in its first stage: warlords and foreign powers were on one side, and the petite bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and the proletariat were on the other. The strategy for this stage of the Communist movement called for continued efforts to organize the workers, and, more important, a united front based on the cooperation between the CCP and the KMT, the two parties that represented the working class, the peasantry, and the petite bourgeoisie. From the standpoint of the CCP the political expediency of a two-party alliance was obvious. The KMT was not merely the only other political party fighting against feudalism and imperialism, it was much stronger than the CCP. Although still a loosely organized party, the KMT commanded tremendous prestige and popular support under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. At the time of the Second National Congress of the CCP, the KMT had a total membership of 150,000, compared with a mere 200 in the CCP.² The alliance would provide a shelter for the Communists to grow.

The new policy differed from the earlier strategy in several major respects. The revolution was no longer viewed as a pure class conflict but as a struggle for national independence, thus enabling the Party to link nationalism to the overall goal of the Communist movement. The exclusive reliance on the urban proletariat was modified to include the poor peasants in order to broaden the power base of the Party. Finally, instead of the simplistic twofold classification

¹CCP, "First Manifesto on the Current Situation," Brandt et al., 1966, pp. 54-63.

²Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 84.

of the population into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the leaders adopted the more pragmatic threefold differentiation: the proletariat, the principal enemy of the proletariat, and a third group comprising the rest of the population. The united front policy simply meant a temporary coalition of the first and third groups against the second. This tactic introduced flexibility in the Party's political maneuvers, for an ally in one stage might well become the primary foe in another and vice versa, depending on the Party's immediate goals.

The united front policy was formally adopted by the Second National Congress in July 1922. About a month later, the Comintern representative, Maring, intervened and compelled the CCP to change its course. In a plenum of the Central Committee at Hangchow in August 1922, Maring instructed the Communists to form a coalition by joining the KMT.¹ The crucial difference between the CCP's united front policy and the Comintern instruction lies in the prospective role of the CCP in relation to the KMT. Whereas the CCP leaders were prepared to become partners, Maring expected them to become assistants to the KMT. The two-party alliance proposed by the CCP leaders emphasized the independence of the CCP. The Party would cooperate with the KMT as a bloc outside the KMT, but not as its appendage. Thus the resolution and the manifesto of the Second Congress of the CCP explicitly stated that "in this struggle the proletariat must not forget their own independent organization," that the proletariat's support of the democratic revolution was not its surrender to the capitalists.² In contrast, the Comintern instruction required the CCP members to join the KMT as individuals. The CCP would work under the leadership of, and as a bloc within, the KMT. Most CCP leaders opposed Maring's proposal on grounds that such an arrangement would confuse class organizations and curb their independent policy. Others contended that the KMT was weak and not worth supporting. But they had to acquiesce when Maring invoked the authority of the Comintern.³

¹ Whether or not Maring acted on his own initiative or on Comintern instructions is not clear. See Schram, 1966, p. 70.

² Wang, 1965, I, p. 60; Brandt et al., 1966, p. 65.

³ Exactly what happened remains obscure. Maring denied that he invoked the discipline of the Comintern. He further stated that

CCP-KMT COALITION: SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Maring's decisive role in formulating the coalition policy marked the beginning of a period in which the Comintern, or more precisely, Moscow, dominated the CCP.¹ The leverage the Kremlin had over the CCP was based in part on financial aid to the Chinese Communists, and in part on its organizational control over the CCP as the leader in the world Communist movement.²

Ironically, the basic elements of the Party's united front policy which Maring rejected were the very ideas put forth by Lenin in his celebrated Theses on the National and Colonial Questions.³ Lenin's theses, which were adopted with only minor amendments by the Second Comintern Congress in July 1920, called upon the Communist parties in the colonial countries to support the bourgeois-democratic movement, and instructed the Comintern to conclude a temporary alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie.⁴ The rationale of Lenin's theses was clear. The Communist parties in these countries were young and weak. Yet Moscow's need for potent allies was immediate and urgent. A coalition between a chosen political group and the Communist party would serve the twofold purpose of developing a pro-Moscow ally and assisting the Communist party to grow. China in the 1920s was perhaps just ripe for a bourgeois-democratic revolution. China was politically divided and

Ch'en Tu-hsiu sided with him. Isaacs, 1966, p. 59. But according to Ch'en, all the members of the Central Committee opposed Maring. Chang, 1966, 8, pp. 84-85; Ch'en 1929, pp. 428-429.

¹ In principle the Soviet Union was only a member of the Comintern. Actually the Comintern was essentially another instrument of Soviet foreign policy.

² The CCP had been receiving financial aid from the Comintern regularly since 1921. Chang, 1966, 6, p. 73. At the Second National Congress the CCP decided to join the Comintern. According to Article 16 of the conditions of admission to the Comintern, the instructions of the Comintern are binding. Degras, 1956, I, p. 171.

³ Chang, 1965, pp. 43-50.

⁴ For an excerpt of the final draft and Roy's supplementary theses, see Eudin and North, 1957, pp. 63-67.

economically dominated by Western powers. Clearly it would be to the Soviet interest to create a united China closely tied to the Soviet Union but antagonistic to other foreign powers. At this stage the CCP was much too weak to become the leading political power. The Comintern therefore turned to the KMT, an established political organization with much greater potential for development. From the Soviet standpoint, the coalition policy was simply a tactical move to secure a firm base in China.¹

But apart from this primary objective, Lenin was also interested in the Communist movement in the colonial countries. Lenin's theses contained the express proviso that the Communist party must remain independent even if it was in its embryonic stage.² In the closing session of the Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in February 1922, Safarov openly warned against amalgamation with national revolutionary groups: "The Chinese workers must tread their own path, must not connect themselves with any democratic party or any bourgeois elements."³ As late as January 1923, in its formal instruction to the CCP to join the KMT, the Comintern specified that under no circumstances should the CCP merge with the KMT or hide its banners in the revolutionary movement.⁴ However, Sun insisted that the only basis of collaboration acceptable to the KMT was the participation of CCP

¹The Soviet search for a political base in China actually began before the CCP was born. As early as 1920 Moscow had shown some interest in the warlord Wu Pei-fu, but later shifted their attention to the KMT. In December 1921 Maring visited Sun in Kweilin and proposed an alliance between the Kremlin and the KMT. Wang, 1965, I, pp. 93-94. In January 1922, at the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, Zinoviev, the Chairman of the Comintern, stated that an alliance between these two groups (the proletariat and the democratic nationalists) was essential. Referring to China, Safarov, head of the Comintern's Eastern Department, said at the same congress that "the Comintern and the Communist Parties are obligated to support the national-democratic movement." Eudin and North, 1957, pp. 226, 229.

²Chang, 1965, p. 49; Degras, 1956, I, p. 144.

³Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 82. Safarov was the head of Comintern's Eastern Department.

⁴"Resolution of the ECCI on the Expected Attitude of the Chinese Communist Party Toward the Kuomintang, January 12, 1923," in Eudin and North, 1957, pp. 343-344.

members in the KMT as individuals.¹ The Comintern was thus confronted with a dilemma. To accept a coalition on Sun's terms would sacrifice an independent Communist movement. To insist on an independent Communist movement would leave the Soviet Union without a potential ally. The former was in the interest of the Soviet foreign policy; the latter in the interest of the world Communist movement. Not surprisingly, the Comintern decided in favor of a coalition even at the cost of the independence of the CCP. To justify the Comintern policy, Maring deviated from the orthodox Marxist doctrine that the party represented a single economic class. He argued that the KMT was not a bourgeois party but a union of the revolutionary elements of several classes and therefore participation in the KMT did not imply a merger of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie.² Joffe, another Soviet envoy, went even further and revised Lenin's theses by declaring that China was unripe for Communism or the Soviet system.³

Sun Yat-sen's decision to accept the Soviet proposal was probably strongly influenced by his desire to secure Soviet military aid.⁴ The overriding goal in Sun's mind was to launch a military campaign against the warlords in order to unify China. The Soviet proposal for the KMT-CCP alliance was in effect a proposal for a KMT-Soviet collaboration. The Soviet offer of military aid came at a most unfortunate time for Sun. He had lost his base in Kwangtung temporarily after Ch'en Chiung-ming broke with him in mid-1922. The Western powers were cool to Sun's revolution and none was willing to help. The price for the Soviet aid was to admit the Communists into the KMT, but that was not without some advantages. It would be to the interest of the KMT to muster the Communist support for the revolution. Moreover, the coalition in its present form would place the CCP, a potential rival, directly under its control.

¹Ch'en, 1929, p. 428.

²Chang, 1966, 8, p. 84.

³Brandt et al., 1966, pp. 70-71.

⁴Chiang, 1965, p. 19.

THE THIRD CCP CONGRESS: MAO VERSUS THE COMINTERN

By mid-1923 when the Third National Congress of the CCP convened in Canton, the Communist leaders became more receptive to the idea of a merger. Only a few months earlier, the warlord Wu Pei-fu ruthlessly suppressed the strike of the Peking-Hankow railroad workers who had the largest and most powerful union in China. The defeat dealt a heavy blow to the Communist-led labor movement and severely demoralized the leaders. At this point the coalition seemed more attractive because it provided a protective cover to recuperate and because it offered a new channel to power through subversion.¹

The main task before the Third Congress was to ratify the collaboration policy imposed upon the CCP by Moscow. According to Chang Kuo-t'ao, there was considerable controversy over this issue. Three divergent views were advanced.² The first was the Comintern line which called for dual membership. Ch'en Tu-hsiu supported this view. The second group, including Chang Kuo-t'ao and Tsai Ho-shen, would accept the Comintern line, but with some reservations. They opposed the idea of the entire CCP becoming a left wing of the KMT. They wanted to be partially independent and to push the labor movement vigorously. Despite their differences, both groups shared the view that the peasants could not play any significant role in the revolution. Taking an opposite stand, Mao proposed a third and more radical alternative of

¹This was the rationale for joining the KMT explained by Ch'en Tu-hsiu in a letter to Chou Fu-hai. Ch'en and Chou, 1967, p. 149.

²Chang, 1966, 10, pp. 78-81. It should be noted that Chang's account of what happened during the Third Congress differs from others. According to Li, 1965, p. 11, the question of peasants and land was not even discussed in the Congress. Jerome Ch'en reported that Mao was for and later against Chang. There was no mention of Mao's having his own proposal. Ch'en, 1967, p. 93. According to the Communists' own version, Mao persisted in holding the correct line, that is, the Comintern line. Ho, 1959, pp. 66-68. It is possible that Chang erred in his memory, but there seems to be no reason for any deliberate distortion to show that Mao had an independent and original contribution. Li's and Ch'en's accounts are not documented. The official version is not difficult to understand. So long as the CCP laid down the line that the Comintern instructions were correct, Communist historians could not but picture Mao as the defender of the Comintern proposal.

uniting with the peasants instead of uniting with the KMT. He argued that the peasants far outnumbered the workers and that historically peasant uprisings were the main force behind all revolutions in China. The basis of KMT's power in Kwangtung was its army and the army was essentially a peasant army. If the CCP concentrated its effort on peasant movements, it would not be difficult for the CCP to establish a base like that of the KMT in Kwangtung.

Mao was not the first to recognize the importance of the peasantry in the revolutionary movement. Lenin earlier had pointed out the need to forge a united front of the workers and peasants in Asian countries, and shortly before the Third Congress the Comintern instructed the CCP to carry out an agrarian revolution simultaneously with the national revolution.¹ Nor was Mao the first to work with the peasants. Peng P'ai preceded him in organizing peasant movements. But there were two basic elements in Mao's strategy that distinguished it from the policies of the Comintern or Peng. First, Mao's strategy was essentially one of "revolution from below," with the peasantry as the power base. He rejected the coalition policy categorically and opted for independent development of the Party. (By contrast, the Comintern line implied a dual strategy of revolution simultaneously from above and below. The twin task was to collaborate with the KMT and to organize mass movements. To build up the Party's political power on the basis of mass organizations was only one part, albeit an essential part, of the program. The peasantry was only one component, although an important component, of the "union of the workers and peasants."²) The second interesting feature in Mao's proposal was his emphasis on military power. Mao foresaw the need to develop an independent military base

¹"Report of the Committee on the National and Colonial Questions," Chang, 1965, pp. 59-60. For a brief summary of Lenin's earlier ideas, see Brandt, 1958, pp. 1-17, and Jackson, 1966, pp. 29-32. For the Comintern instruction to the CCP, see Degas, 1956, II, pp. 25-26.

²In its instruction to the CCP Third Congress, the Comintern still insisted that "to strengthen the Communist Party, making it a mass party of the proletariat, to assemble the forces of the workers in unions -- this is the overriding obligation of Communists." Degas, 1956, II, pp. 25-26.

and the potential of the peasantry in organizing an army, while both Peng P'ai and the Comintern overlooked the military implications of organizing peasant movements.

As may be expected, the Comintern line prevailed. The Party passed the resolution recognizing the KMT as the central force in the national revolution and called upon all Communists to join the KMT.¹ On January 20, 1924, the First National Congress of the KMT convened in Canton. The Congress formally adopted Sun's policy of alliance with the Soviet Union and admission of the Communists to KMT membership. Three Communist leaders were elected to the twenty-four member Central Executive Committee of the KMT, and six (including Mao) to deputy membership. Of the eight departments of the KMT, two were now headed by the Communists.

The coalition lasted for four years and ended in a political catastrophe for the Communists. Instead of turning into a staunch ally of the Soviet Union as the Comintern had planned, the KMT emerged hostile and belligerent toward the Soviet Union. Instead of taking over the leadership of the KMT as the Communists had hoped, the CCP suffered a tremendous loss in power, prestige, and Party members after a series of purges by the KMT culminating in the complete dissolution of the entente in July 1927. The causes of the failure were many. Perhaps the most important was the basic contradiction between the two objectives of the Comintern.² The first objective was to unify China under the leadership of the KMT. This would call for strengthening the party organization and the military power of the KMT. The second objective was to develop the Chinese Communist movement. To this end the Comintern directed the CCP to build up its power within the coalition framework, by infiltrating, subverting, and splitting the KMT, and by organizing mass movements. Clearly the effort in one direction might

¹ CCP, "Manifesto of the Third National Congress," and "Tasks of the CCP," Wang, 1965, I, pp. 80-83.

² Other factors include the untimely deaths of Lenin in 1924 and Sun in 1925, the two architects of the collaboration policy, subversive activities of the CCP, disagreement among the Comintern representatives, and personal rivalry between the civilian authorities and the military commander within the KMT.

well undermine the effort in the other. The conflict could be resolved only if the Comintern could effectively keep the KMT under control at all times. This was the basic assumption underlying the Soviet policy. But the events that unfolded ran counter to the Comintern's expectations. As the KMT developed into a well-organized military force, it also became increasingly independent of the Soviet influence and inimical toward the CCP. It was precisely Stalin's miscalculation at the outset and his obsession with preserving the alliance at all costs later that finally led to the debacle in 1927. Thus, paradoxically, the collapse of the CCP-KMT political alliance was in an important sense the successful outcome of Soviet-KMT military collaboration. Let us review briefly the major developments during this epoch.

The Soviet-KMT collaboration began with the arrival of Michael Borodin in Canton in October 1923 to become Sun's political advisor. From the very beginning, Borodin made it clear that revitalizing the KMT must be given the highest priority of his mission.¹ Up to now the KMT was not strictly a party by Bolshevik standards but largely a group of followers of Sun. Borodin therefore set out immediately to reorganize the KMT after the Soviet system. He established a monolithic power structure, introduced strict party discipline, and set up a cadre training program. More significant, he helped to build up the military power of the KMT. Shipments of arms were sent to the KMT army in Canton.² In May 1924 the Whampoa Military Academy was established with Chiang Kai-shek as the president. A group of about forty Soviet advisers headed by Vassili Blucher (more widely known as Galen) were engaged as military instructors. The Soviet system of maintaining political departments in the army was also adopted. With the body of cadets from the Military Academy as the nucleus, the KMT created a partisan army that was better organized, more reliable, and with greater fighting power than the mercenary troops it had had earlier. The new army soon

¹ Interview with Borodin reported in Hsian-tao chou-pao (Guide Weekly), No. 45, November 7, 1923, quoted in Kuo, 1966, p. 105.

² The first shipment arrived in October 1924. In the fourteen months between October 1924 and December 1925, the Soviet Union provided the KMT with two million rubles worth of supplies. Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 169.

became a major force in the struggle for power. In 1925 the KMT succeeded in consolidating its base in Kwangtung for the first time by eliminating the two military groups threatening the Canton Government: the Merchant Corps (a militia organized by the Cantonese merchants with British support), and the warlord Ch'en Chiung-ming who occupied eastern Kwangtung. By early 1926 Chiang was ready to launch the military campaign against the warlords in the north.

PROGRESS IN COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS

While the KMT was rapidly growing in strength with Soviet support, the CCP was also making considerable progress in consolidating its position within and outside the KMT. The CCP leaders adopted two principal tactics in dealing with the KMT.¹ The first was to split the KMT into the Left and the Right and to ally with the Left against the Right. The second tactic was to organize CCP factions within the KMT.² The purpose was to form blocs of Communist members at all levels of the KMT party organ to act collectively in carrying out the CCP's decisions. Mainly as a result of the Communist activities, tensions between the KMT Right and the CCP members steadily mounted. The first major clash occurred barely six months after the KMT admitted the Communists. In June 1924 several members of the Central Supervisory Committee of the KMT filed an impeachment against the Communists for their subversive activities within the KMT.³ Sun decided not to take any punitive action, partly because he was confident the KMT could still keep the CCP under control, and partly because a split would be unwise at this time with such warlords as Wu Pei-fu and Ch'en Chiung-ming threatening the very existence of the KMT itself. But frictions between the two parties continued to develop. After Sun's death in March 1925, the situation was further complicated by the struggle for power within the KMT. The Left and the Right KMT were deeply divided over whether or not to expel

¹ Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 89.

² Borodin admitted that the Communists began to organize factions three months after they joined the KMT. Kuo, 1966, p. 398.

³ Li, 1966, pp. 289-337.

the Communists. In January 1926, the Second National Congress of the KMT was held in Canton. Dominated by the Left, the Congress decided to continue Sun's policy of coalition. In terms of the number of Communists elected to the KMT leadership, the CCP also scored a success. A comparison of the organizational structure of the KMT following the First and Second National Congress reveals that although still a minority in the Central Executive Committee, the CCP now occupied more than twice as many seats as before, and were in control of one-half of the central departments.¹ In addition, members of the powerful Financial Committee and many political commissars in the army were Communists.² According to Tan P'ing-shan, of the total 278 votes at the Congress, 168 were controlled by the Communists or the Left. The Communist penetration into the KMT party hierarchy demonstrated the capability of the Communists to seize power by political maneuvers and organizational means. Their success seemed all the more remarkable in view of the fact that they had neither a solid power base nor any Soviet support comparable in scale to what the Soviet Union had been providing other non-Communist parties in China.³

¹ The relative position of the CCP in the KMT Central Executive Committee was as follows:

	KMT First Congress, 1924	KMT Second Congress, 1926
Central Executive Committee		
Total members	24	36
of which: Communists	3	7
Number of central departments	8	8
Meaded by Communists	2	4

For sources, see Li, 1966, pp. 267-268, 270, 472-474. Actually, only three Communist department heads were appointed. But Mao later became acting head of the Propaganda Department.

² Li, 1966, pp. 474-475.

³ According to the Soviet semi-annual budget of expenditures in China for 1925-1926, direct payments to the CCP amounted to only 13 percent of the total, compared with 76 percent used to support Fung Yu-hsiang and the KMT Second and Third Army. KMT, 1964, Annex I, pp. 196-199.

However, the political triumph of the CCP was brief, for a dramatic shift of power was soon to unfold. Earlier, the power struggle following Sun's death ended temporarily with Wang Ching-wei becoming the Party leader. It was with Wang's support that the Left had been able to dominate the Second Congress. But in early 1926 Chiang Kai-shek, Commander of the powerful First Army, became perturbed by the activities of the Communists within the KMT and by the Soviet advisers' overt attempt to take over direct control of part of the military apparatus.¹ The Soviet advisers' refusal to go along with his plans for the Northern Expedition was another major cause of disagreement between Chiang and the Russians. On March 20, 1926, Chiang made an abrupt and decisive move to check the influence of the Soviet advisers and the Communists. He placed the Russians under arrest, dismissed all the Communist officers and political commissars at the Military Academy and in his First Army, and disarmed the left wing Committee of Workers.² The incident took the Russians by surprise, for only a week before the coup the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) adopted the Resolution on the China Question which praised the Canton Government as "a model for the future revolutionary-democratic structure of the country."³ In May 1926 the Second Plenum of the KMT Central Committee passed a resolution that severely restricted the Communist activities within the KMT.⁴ Despite the humiliation and the pleas from the CCP leaders to withdraw from the KMT, Moscow decided to maintain the KMT-CCP entente.⁵ Moscow's conciliatory policy saved the alliance, but it was hardly worth saving from

¹Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 212-213.

²For a report on the coup by Stepanov, a Soviet military adviser, see Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 248-253. Details of the incident are given in Li, 1966, pp. 483-503. For Chang Kuo-t'ao's interpretation, see Chang, 1966, pp. 96-97.

³Degras, 1956, II, pp. 277-279.

⁴Henceforth CCP members were not to occupy more than one-third of the executive posts in the higher KMT organizations and no Communists should be appointed the director of the Central Departments. Because of this new resolution, Mao and other Communist department heads had to resign. Wang, 1965, I, pp. 154-155.

⁵Ch'en, 1929, pp. 429-430.

the standpoint of the CCP. The concentration of power in the hands of Chiang had made it virtually impossible for the CCP to reestablish control over the KMT leadership with or without the alliance. Clearly the strategy of revolution from above had failed.

The Party's effort to strengthen itself outside the KMT was more successful. In an enlarged plenum of the CCP Central Committee in 1924 the leaders decided that the primary task of the Party was to consolidate and expand the Communist organizations, particularly the Party and the workers' unions.¹ In January 1925 the Fourth National Congress in Shanghai reaffirmed these decisions.² It amended the Party Constitution and adopted a resolution to establish a nationwide network of party cells.³ Training programs were set up to teach the Party members techniques of propaganda and agitation. Party schools were also established to provide ideological training. The more promising students were sent to the Soviet Union for further schooling.

The result of this effort is shown in Table 1 which presents the total number of members in the CCP during the six years between the First National Congress in 1921 and the great purge of the Party in April 1927. It is clear that total membership in the CCP had greatly expanded during this period. But although expansion had been continuous up to 1927, the growth was uneven. Increases prior to 1925 were relatively small compared with the period after 1925. The acceleration after the fourth Congress in 1925 was partly the result of the Party's intensified effort and partly the outcome of the wave of nationalism generated by the May Thirtieth Incident.⁴ The latter event was

¹ Chang, 1966, 10, pp. 90-92.

² Kuo, 1966, p. 138; Chang, 1966, 13, p. 88.

³ Huang, 1957, p. 20.

⁴ On May 30, 1925, the police in the British Concession in Shanghai fired on a group of demonstrators protesting against the killing of a Chinese textile worker by the Japanese. Scores of persons were wounded or killed. The incident turned into a national movement against the Japanese and the British. M. N. Roy, in his treatise on the revolution in China, described this day as "a milestone of singular importance." Roy, 1946, p. 353.

Table 1
GROWTH OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST
PARTY, 1921-1927

	Number of Members	Average Annual Increase
1921, July	57	-
1922, July	123	66
1923, June	432	309
1925, May	1,000	234
1926, July	30,000	29,000
1927, April	57,900	27,900
1928, June	40,000	-17,900

Source:

Chiao I-ping and Chang Kung, "A Résumé of Various National Congresses of the Chinese Communist Party," Hsin-hua pan-yueh-kan (New China Semi-monthly), No. 19, 1956, pp. 1-4; "A Brief History of the Chinese Communist Party," in Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 74; CCP, "Resolutions on the Question of Organization," Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 110.

particularly significant in bringing about the phenomenal growth in 1925-1926. In less than a year total membership increased thirty times. In the Second Enlarged Plenum of the Central Committee in July 1926, the Party continued to emphasize the growth of the Party.¹ By the time the Fifth National Congress convened in April 1927, total membership reached a peak of 58,000. The continuous expansion, however, came to a halt when Chiang staged a nationwide purge of the Communists.

During the coalition period the labor movement also surged forward. In the three years between 1922 and 1925, the number of workers organized in unions increased from 270,000 to 540,000.² By mid-1926 the total exceeded a million.³ Under the direction and firm control of the CCP, the National Federation of Labor Unions was organized.⁴ When the May Thirtieth Incident occurred the unions displayed unprecedented strength and unity in their struggle against the Western powers. Mass demonstrations and strikes spread from Shanghai to numerous other major cities in China. Although the strikes ended in a defeat, the political impact was great. The incident provided a powerful impetus to the revolutionary movement and demonstrated to the CCP leaders the importance of nationalism and how it could be exploited to help the cause of Communism.⁵

THE LEADERS' CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PEASANTRY

The renewed emphasis on revolution from below also brought a pronounced change in the leaders' attitude toward the peasantry. The general trend may be seen from Table 2 which shows the various types of slogans that were used to mobilize the peasants during 1921-1926. Four broad categories of demands concerning the peasantry had been

¹CCP, "Resolutions on the Question of Organization," Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 112.

²Ho, 1957, pp. 44, 66.

³CCP, "Fifth Manifesto on the Current Situation," Wang, 1965, p. 217.

⁴Ho, 1957, p. 65. Of the 25 members in the Executive Committee of the Federation, 23 were Communists.

⁵Chang, 1966, 13, p. 98.

Table 2
PEASANT POLICY OF THE CCP AS REFLECTED IN
THE PARTY SLOGANS, 1921-1926

	Restriction of Land Tax and Rent	Organization of Peasant Unions	Armed Self- Defense	Land Redis- tribution
1921 July, First Congress	-	-	-	-
1922 June, First Manifesto	+	-	-	+
1922 July, Second Congress	+	-	-	-
1923 June, Third Congress	+	-	-	-
1924 Nov., Fourth Manifesto	+	+	+	-
1925 Jan., Fourth Congress	+	+	+	-
1925 July, Open Letter	+	-	+	+
1926 July, Fifth Manifesto	+	+	+	-
1926 July, Second Plenum	+	+	+	-

Notes:

+ indicates policy included in declaratory statement.
- indicates policy not included in declaratory statement.

Source:

"Manifesto of the First National Congress," Ch'en, 1924; "First Manifesto on the Current Situation," Red Documents, p. 33; "Manifesto of the Second National Congress," Brandt *et al.*, p. 72; Wang, 1965, p. 81; "Fourth Manifesto on the Current Situation," Red Documents, p. 54; Li, 1965, p. 12; CCP and the Chinese Youth Corps, "An Open Letter to the People Struggling for National Freedom in the May Thirtieth Movement," Red Documents, p. 75; "Fifth Manifesto on the Current Situation," Wang, 1965, p. 216; "Resolutions on the Peasant Movement," Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 296-302.

listed in the resolutions and manifestos of the CCP: reduction or restriction of rent or taxes on land; organization of peasant unions; arming the peasants; and redistribution of land. Three broad findings are suggested by the data in Table 2. First, there was a marked tendency for the Party leaders to include in their declaratory statements more and more slogans in the interest of the peasants. At the time of the First National Congress in 1921, the Party leaders were so absorbed in the labor movements that the peasantry was totally neglected. Hence the major documents made no reference to any of the demands listed in Table 2. In the two succeeding years the leaders began to recognize the peasants as the principal ally of the proletariat, but still they showed relatively little interest in peasant problems. Beginning in 1924, the first year of the coalition period, they had added more demands and persisted in a broadened peasant program ever since.

Second, there had been a change in the nature of these slogans. Prior to 1924, restriction of land taxes and rent was about the leaders' only objective. The resolutions called for administrative and legislative measures to bring about the changes. The implication of this policy is twofold. It indicates that the leaders were concerned with the peasants as a whole and not with any group in particular, for the reduction of land taxes would benefit the land owners just as the reduction of rent would help the tenants. Furthermore, the leaders had no intention of uprooting the existing political order in the villages. But since 1924 they proposed organizing and arming the peasants in addition to demands for lower rent and taxes. The new demands were of such a nature that if carried out the local power structure would be drastically changed.

Third, despite the trend toward more radical measures, the redistribution of land was not among the most frequently used slogans. Throughout the period, land redistribution was mentioned only twice. In its first manifesto on the current situation in June 1922, the Party advocated the confiscation of the properties of the militarists and redistribution of their land holdings among the poor peasants. Apparently the importance of land reform as an instrument to rally the peasants to

their side had not been fully appreciated. At the Third National Congress in June 1923, the Party again called for confiscation of the warlords' property, but the demand was deleted.¹ In July 1925 the question of land confiscation was raised the second time in a joint statement by the CCP and the Communist Youth Corps on the May Thirtieth Incident. The statement proposed limiting the size of the land holdings and redistributing any amount over the maximum limit among the landless peasants.² But again, the proposal was dropped in the Resolution on the Peasant Movements adopted by the Second Plenum of the CCP in July 1926.³ The vacillations reflected the lack of a consistent land program. Thus even as late as 1926 the CCP was still uncertain as to what specific political platform the Party should adopt, so far as the peasants were concerned.⁴

It is interesting to note that over the same period the Comintern had been more radical than the CCP in their attitude toward the land problem in China. As early as 1923 the Comintern emphasized in its instructions to the CCP that the central question of all policy was the peasant question, and that in the areas occupied by Sun Yat-sen's forces it was essential to put through the confiscation of the land in favor of the poor peasants.⁵ At about the same time, Borodin urged the KMT to declare a policy of land to the tillers as proposed by Sun earlier.⁶ In March 1926, the Comintern again stressed that the most important question of the Chinese national liberation movement was the peasant question, and that the most important task of the CCP and the KMT was "to win the peasant masses for active struggle on

¹ CCP, "The Tasks of the CCP," Wang, 1965, I, p. 81.

² "Statement to the People Struggling for National Freedom during the May Thirtieth Movement," Red Documents, p. 75.

³ Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 296-302.

⁴ In its Resolutions on the Peasant Movement, the Central Committee stated: "a complete peasant political platform would have to await discussion at the Fifth Congress." Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 297.

⁵ Degras, 1956, II, pp. 25-26.

⁶ Li, 1966, p. 222; Schram, 1966, p. 82; Sun, 1927, pp. 431, 456.

behalf of fighting slogans which link up political and economic demands comprehensible to and important for the peasantry with the general political tasks of the fight against militarists and imperialists."¹

The divergence of views between Moscow and the CCP over the revolutionary qualities of the peasants and the land problem has led Communist historians to denounce the CCP leadership for failing to carry out the Comintern instructions.² However, it seems more plausible that the radical land program was intended to be a long range goal rather than an immediate task. In May 1926 when the CCP did follow Moscow's advice and requested that the peasants in Kwangtung be armed with some of the Soviet military equipment being shipped to the KMT, the proposal was turned down by the Comintern.³ Again in October 1926, Stalin directed the CCP to keep the peasant movements in check for fear that they might jeopardize the CCP-KMT alliance.⁴ The inconsistency between the Comintern's declaratory and actual policies was simply another manifestation of the conflict between the interest of the Soviet Union and the interest of the world Communist movement.

More significant than the divergence of views between the CCP and the Comintern was the fact that the policies of the CCP did not go very far beyond the use of slogans. There was no intensifying of activities in rural work as a result of the change in their attitude toward the peasantry. Few leaders participated in the peasant movements as many did in the labor movements. Until 1926, there was no organization at the party central to direct the peasant movements.⁵ Party members were recruited mostly from the workers and intellectuals. Thus in late 1926, of the total CCP membership, only 5 percent were peasants, compared with 66 percent being workers.⁶

¹"Extracts from the Resolution of the Sixth ECCI Plenum on the Chinese Question," Degras, 1956, II, p. 279.

²See, for example, Mif, 1936.

³Degras, 1956, II, pp. 276-277.

⁴Ibid., p. 337.

⁵Schram, 1966, p. 92. Chang Kuo-t'ao's memoirs confirmed this date. But according to Wang, 1965, I, p. 51, the Peasant Department was set up soon after the Second National Congress in 1922.

⁶Degras, 1956, II, p. 336.

However, it would be incorrect to say that the Party as a whole had not been engaged in any rural work at all. The inertia within the Party had been largely on the part of the Central Committee. While the leaders were preoccupied with the coalition and labor movements, some Party members, notably Mao, Peng P'ai and a group of cadres trained at the Peasant Movement Training Institute, were actively organizing peasant unions with little participation or support from the Central Committee. During this period agrarian unrest had been steadily brewing in the southern provinces. In late 1926 and early 1927, the storm broke out and the peasant movement became the central issue that stirred up bitter disputes not only between the CCP and the KMT, but also between the CCP leaders themselves, between Roy and Borodin, and between Stalin and Trotsky in Moscow. In the following two sections, I shall describe briefly the origin, nature, and impact of the peasant movements.

III. PEASANT MOVEMENTS

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENTS

By peasant movements I refer to the organization of peasant unions and the series of activities of these unions in the 1920s. The peasant movement was perhaps the most dramatic event in the villages since the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s. In certain respects it was similar to the peasant uprisings so common in the history of China.¹ As in the past, the rise of the peasantry occurred in times of severe economic distress and political disorder. The movement was no less widespread or violent than the revolts of the past. Its primary purpose at the beginning was to defend the peasants against oppression by others, but soon shifted to the seizure of power, just as many peasant uprisings in the past turned from a struggle for survival into a struggle for the Mandate of Heaven. However, there were also some basic differences. The peasant revolts were generally sporadic and poorly organized. In contrast, the peasant movement had organization and, to a certain degree, leadership and an ideology provided by the Communists. The revolts, even when successful, only brought about a change in dynasty. The social and economic order in the villages usually remained intact.² The peasant movement, however, represented an organized effort to remodel some of the traditional institutions in the villages. The following discussion focuses, first, on the nature of the agrarian unrest common to both the traditional and the current uprisings, and second, on how the peasant movement, which might have enhanced the power of the CCP, actually brought about a collapse in the Communist movement.

¹ For a brief discussion of the frequency and scale of the peasant revolts in the history of China, see Teng, 1961, pp. 104-123; Chien, 1951, pp. 6-8, 17. A collection of essays on the nature of peasant revolts by Communist writers is given in Shih, 1962. That such uprisings were rather common is illustrated by a case study of the border region between Kiangsi and Fukien where Mao established his base later. Within a period of about 180 years (1448-1627), 67 revolts were reported, or once every three years. Lee, 1951, p. 512.

² The Taiping Rebellion was a possible exception. See, however, Li, 1967, pp. 84-87.

The peasant movement began in 1922 shortly after the CCP was founded, and ended with the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising in 1927.¹ One can distinguish three phases in its development: the embryonic period in 1922-1924, the period of expansion from the beginning of the CCP-KMT alliance in 1924 to the launching of the Northern Expedition in 1926, and finally the period of unprecedented growth in 1926-1927.

The peasant unions organized during the first period were largely due to the pioneering effort of the Communist Peng P'ai. In September 1922, Peng established the first hsiang peasant union in Chi-shan-yueh, Kwangtung, with a total membership of 500 farm households.² Since then, the movement gradually spread to the neighboring hsien. But the development met with increasing resistance from the warlord Ch'en Chiung-ming and the local gentry in Hai-feng. At the beginning, the warlord tolerated Peng's activities, but decided to suppress the movement in 1923 when the organized peasants grew in number and became a potential threat to his power. The local gentry, mostly relatives of the warlord, opposed the peasant movement mainly because the unions, acting as a new countervailing bloc in the rural political structure, inevitably infringed upon their economic interests. Nonetheless the movement steadily advanced. By later 1923, about 100,000 peasant households were organized in Kwangtung and another 100,000 in Hunan.³

In 1924 the CCP-KMT alliance was formed, and the political climate became much more favorable to the peasant movement. A Peasant Department within the KMT was set up to direct and promote the peasant movements.⁴ Cadres were trained in a newly established Peasant Movement

¹ Communist historians generally dated the beginning of the movement back to 1921. But the evidence assembled by Eto suggests that it actually began in May 1922. See Eto, 1961, pp. 169-170.

² For a detailed account of Peng's activities, see Peng, 1926; and Eto, 1961.

³ Ho, 1959, p. 83.

⁴ For a report on the activities of the Peasant Department by Ch'en Kung-po, see CKNM, No. 2, 1926, pp. 114-120, 147-207.

Training Institute and later sent to the villages. Occasionally the army was dispatched to assist the peasant unions in their fight against the armed units (the min-tuan) controlled by the local gentry.¹ In 1925 the KMT succeeded in unifying the Kwangtung province by defeating Ch'en Chiung-ming. From then on the number of farm households joining the unions in Kwangtung and other provinces increased sharply. By July 1926, on the eve of the Northern Expedition, over a million farm households belonged to the unions in fifteen provinces. However, in a relative sense, the total is minuscule, representing only 3 percent of the total farm households in these provinces.

The peasant movements became a significant event only after the KMT army reestablished control over such provinces as Hunan, Hupeh, and Kiangsi. Table 3 presents the total membership of the peasant unions in 15 provinces in 1926 and 1927, and the corresponding participation rates, defined as the percentage of total peasant households in unions. As the table shows, total membership increased sevenfold within a year. In July 1927, just before the Nationalist Government at Wu-han split with the CCP, over 20 percent of the total farm households had joined the peasant unions.

Two general observations on the development of the movement may be worth mentioning. The first is that significant upsurges in the movement generally followed the removal of the provincial warlord. This was evident in Kwangtung in 1925, and in Hunan and Hupeh in 1926-1927. The abrupt advance suggested that some powerful forces underlying the movement had been accumulating through the years so that once the warlord was deposed, thousands of peasant unions emerged overnight. The second notable feature is the geographical concentration of the peasant movement in a few provinces. Soon after Peng P'ai began the movement in Kwangtung, similar attempts to organize the peasants were made in other provinces.² But up to 1926, Kwangtung, Hunan, and Honan

¹For example, see Peasant Movements, 1953, pp. 144-145, 152-154; CKNM, No. 1, 1926, pp. 47-49.

²Lamb, 1934, pp. 72-75.

Table 3
PEASANT UNIONS, 1926-1927

	Size of Membership		Percent of Farm Households	
	1926 (thousands)	1927	1926	1927
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Hunan	138.2	3,387.8	3.6	86.9
Hupeh	2.7	2,502.6	0.1	63.2
Kwangtung	665.4	700.0	19.1	20.1
Shensi	1.0	705.2	0.1	50.9
Kiangsi	6.3	382.6	0.2	11.6
Honan	270.0	245.5	5.3	4.8
Szechuan	9.9	33.2	0.2	0.7
Fukien	0.3	28.4	b	1.8
Shansi	a	17.0	a	0.9
Kwangsi	8.1	8.1	0.6	0.6
Anhwei	6.3	6.6	0.2	0.2
Jehol	2.2	5.4	0.5	1.2
Chahar	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.2
Hopei	1.9	0.4	b	b
Shantung	0.3	0.3	b	b
Total	1,113.2	8,023.7	2.6	20.5

Notes:

^aNot available.

^bLess than 0.05 percent.

Sources:

- (1). Lamb, 1934, p. 78. No annotation is given as to what specific data these figures refer to. A comparison with the data given in Peasant Movements, pp. 17-18, indicates that they refer to totals in June 1926.
- (2). Peasant Movements, pp. 18-19. Totals refer to those in June 1927. In Hunan, total membership (4,517,000) exceeded the total number of farm households (3,896,700) indicating that more than one member of the household had joined the union. It is assumed that one-half of the total members represented one household each, and that for the rest, there were two members to each household.
- (3) and (4). Percentages are obtained by dividing the number of union members by the corresponding number of farm households given in Population Problems, p. 15.

were about the only three provinces with some success. As Table 3 shows, only 15 of the 28 provinces in China had peasant unions, and of these all but the three just mentioned had participation rates of less than one percent. After the rapid expansion in 1926-1927, the geographical distribution varied only slightly. The movement largely concentrated in six provinces. The most important ones were Hunan and Hupeh where two-thirds of the farm households were organized. In Kwangtung and Honan, two provinces with high participation rates in 1926, there was virtually no change. In several others, notably Shansi and Kiangsi, the number of peasants in unions greatly increased.

THE ROLE OF THE CCP

The upsurge raised several interesting questions. Was the movement mainly a spontaneous development or was it primarily Communist directed? What specifically had the peasant union to offer in order to generate the movement? Was land tenure a major factor in explaining the development in general and the pattern of geographical concentration in particular? Let us examine these problems in turn.

In discussing the role of the CCP, it would be useful to distinguish: (1) the leaders at the Party center; (2) Mao, who at this point was still an outsider in the top party hierarchy; and (3) Communist cadres who actually organized the movement in the villages. During the first phase of the peasant movements in 1921-1924, the Central Committee made no special effort to organize the peasants. None of the official documents dealt specifically with the problems of peasant movements. Nor did any members of the Central Committee participate in rural work, with the exception of Mao. At this stage they were preoccupied with labor movements and the CCP-KMT alliance. To the Communist leaders the peasants were backward, conservative, and widely dispersed so that propaganda work would be rather difficult. Consequently, the peasant movement during this period was almost completely independent of the Communist movement. Whatever progress there was in Kwangtung and Hunan was achieved with virtually no guidance or support from the Party center.

After the coalition with the KMT was formed in 1924, the Central Committee was forced by circumstances to assume a more positive role. The KMT under Sun Yat-sen had a strong interest in the peasantry and the land problem. Sun had long advocated "equal share of land ownership" and his ideas were incorporated in the agrarian program presented before the First Party Congress in 1924.¹ Although he rejected Borodin's proposal of nationalization of all land, he put forth the goal of "land to the tillers."² When the KMT was reorganized in 1924, a Peasant Department was established with branches at the provincial level to direct and promote peasant movements. One of the major tasks of the CCP following the coalition was to seek hegemony within the KMT, and in the Peasant Department the CCP was quite successful.³ The first head of the Peasant Department was a Communist.⁴ The Peasant Movement Training Institute, set up by the KMT in 1924, was almost completely controlled by the CCP. In two years, over 550 students graduated from the Institute, of which one-third were sent to work in Kwangtung and the others to their native provinces to direct peasant movements.⁵ In 1926 Mao was appointed Director of the Institute. Many Communist leaders such as Chou En-lai and Li Li-san lectured at the Institute. In effect, the Institute became a training school for Communist rural cadres.

On the eve of the Northern Expedition, the Central Committee issued a resolution on the peasant movement.⁶ The resolution was the first document that laid down some broad guidelines for Party work in the rural areas.⁷ The Party recognized that it had "not devoted a great

¹ Sun, 1927, pp. 431, 456; CKNM, No. 1, 1926, p. 12.

² Sun, 1948, pp. 1-4.

³ Eto, 1962, pp. 179-181.

⁴ Lin Tso-han headed the Peasant Department in 1924.

⁵ CKNM, No. 2, 1926, p. 118.

⁶ "Resolutions on the Peasant Movement" adopted by the Second Enlarged Plenum in Shanghai, July 12-18, 1926, in Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 296-302.

⁷ According to Communist records, an earlier resolution on the peasant movement was issued by the Fourth Party Congress in 1925 in which the Party decided to organize peasant unions on a large scale. Ho, 1957, p. 63. However, the resolution has never been found in Communist or Western literature.

deal of time to work in the peasant movement" and called upon the cadres to "secure the force of the peasantry and the directing power in the peasant movement."¹ The resolution, however, was not unduly radical, for the Party directed the cadres not to attack all big landlords and made no demands for land redistribution.² The cautious attitude is understandable, for by this time the Party was already confronted with the basic dilemma of having to choose between the two antagonizing policies: revolution from above and revolution from below. Because the KMT leaders favored a less radical approach to the peasant problem, to push the peasant movements vigorously would alienate the KMT leaders and thereby undermine the coalition, whereas to preserve the unity between the two parties would mean sacrificing the interest of the peasants. Since the overriding concern was the entente with the KMT, the Party decided to adopt a positive yet cautious position toward the peasant movements. Nonetheless the resolution is significant because it represented the first determined effort of the Party to strengthen the Communist leadership in the movement. However, their work had hardly begun when the situation in Hunan developed into a torrential movement in late 1926 and early 1927. The policy of the leaders then turned abruptly from active support to passive restraint, for fear that the peasant movement might alienate the KMT generals and thereby obstruct the alliance with the KMT.³

To sum up, the Central Committee could hardly claim any substantial credit in the peasant movements. The pioneering work in Kwangtung was not initiated by the Party. Nor did the Central Committee provide the peasants active support at the later stage of its development. About

¹ Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 297, 301.

² In a secret document the Party leaders actually condemned the peasant movement as being overly aggressive: "The peasant movement has developed the disease of left deviation everywhere. Either the slogans are extreme or action is excessively Left-inclined. Consequently the peasants themselves often suffer great damage before the enemy has been hit." "Political Report of the Central Committee," in Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 277.

³ See the critical report on the CCP leadership during this period by three Comintern representatives, N. Nassnow, N. Fokine, and A. Albrecht, "The Letter from Shanghai," in Trotsky, 1967, pp. 410-412.

the only major contribution from the Party center was the training of rural cadres at the Peasant Movement Training Institute. In retrospect, the Editorial Committee of Mao's Selected Works had this to say about the Central Committee: "Scared by the reactionary current of the KMT, they dared not support the great revolutionary struggles of the peasants that had broken out or were breaking out. To appease the KMT, they preferred to desert the peasantry, the chief ally in the revolution and thus landed the working class and the Communist Party in helpless isolation."¹

What was Mao's role in the peasant movements during this period? Communist writers had featured Mao as the leader of the peasant movements.² He was credited with having actively participated in the movement in Hunan since 1921.³ The Peasant Movement Training Institute in 1925-1926 under his directorship had trained many cadres for the movement.⁴ His two essays, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" and "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan," were said to have become the basic documents that guided the Communists in the rural struggle.⁵ There can be little doubt that Mao was a staunch supporter of the peasant movements. But it would be misleading to say that "the peasant movement was an inseparable part of Mao's revolutionary activities."⁶ In the first place, Mao's participation in the movement was rather brief. The earliest peasant unions certainly were not Mao's work. Nor were the first peasant unions in Hunan organized by Mao.⁷ Although some Communist writers dated his participation in the rural revolutionary struggle as early as 1922 or 1924, Mao stated in his

¹ Selected Works, I, p. 21.

² See, for example, Ho, 1957, p. 89.

³ Li, 1951, p. 24.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.; Hu, 1964, p. 19.

⁶ Ho, 1957, p. 89.

⁷ They were organized by some unknown Communists in 1923. Li, 1951, p. 27.

autobiography that he did not begin organizing peasant unions in Hunan until after the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925.¹ His activities in Hunan ended a few months later when the warlord Chao Heng-ti forced him to flee to Canton in late 1925. According to one Communist historian, Mao set up numerous peasant unions during his brief stay in Hunan.² Actually, he organized some twenty peasant unions, a negligibly small number compared to the 6,800 unions organized in Hunan during the year December 1925 to November 1926.³

In Canton Mao was put in charge of the Peasant Movement Training Institute, which certainly performed a very important function of training a body of organizers. But Mao did not organize the Institute as one Communist claimed.⁴ He headed the Institute for only about a year. Four other directors preceded him. More than 450 cadres had graduated from the Institute before Mao took over.⁵ Clearly, other Communists besides Mao also contributed significantly to the training program.

One interesting point about Mao's activities during this period deserves mention. Mao was appointed Director for the Sixth Training Session on March 16, 1926.⁶ The session ran from May 3 to October 5, 1926. During this period Mao maintained close relationships with the KMT. He was the Deputy Head of the Propaganda Department, editor of the Political Weekly, and a member of the Peasant Movement Commission, all Party organizations of the KMT. The same period witnessed Chiang Kai-shek's ascent to power following two major purges of the Communists in March and May, 1926. According to Communist historians, Mao proposed a determined counterattack on Chiang after the March coup and was overruled.⁷ Mao remained in the Peasant Movement Commission after

¹Li, 1951, p. 24; Hu, 1964, p. 17; Snow, 1961, p. 160.

²Hu, 1952, p. 74.

³Snow, 1961, p. 160; Peasant Movements, p. 257.

⁴Hu, 1952, p. 74.

⁵Peasant Movements, p. 7.

⁶CKNM, No. 4, 1926, p. 445.

⁷Miao, 1957, p. 34; Hu, 1952, p. 76.

the March coup. Later, in May, he and other Communist department heads were forced to resign. But Mao's other positions in the KMT apparently were not affected. It might be that Mao remained in close collaboration with the KMT to prepare the cadres in the Institute for a future guerrilla war.¹ But it is also possible that Mao at this moment was more concerned with collaboration than with the agrarian revolution.

The impact of Mao's writings on the peasant movements is difficult to ascertain. The document on social classes was a highly perceptive essay on the role of the peasantry in Mao's united front strategy. But it was not a blueprint for organizing peasant movements. It did not advocate a radical land policy and vigorous organization of the peasants as Mao had claimed in his autobiography.² His second essay, "Report on Peasant Movements in Hunan," was illuminating in many respects, but it could not have had anything to do with the upsurge in Hunan, since it was written and published after the upsurge occurred. All this is not to say that Mao's contribution to the peasant movement was insignificant. Indeed, no other member of the Central Committee had been more outspoken in support of the peasant movement. The point is simply that Mao's influence on the course of development was probably much less profound than the Communist writers would have us believe.

The role of the rural cadres including the second echelon leaders was very different from that of the Central Committee. Historical accounts of the movement suggest that in many localities the Communist cadres had been instrumental in launching the movement.³ The experience of Peng P'ai in Kwangtung was a case in point. According to Peng's report, more than half the peasants in his native county, Haifeng, were tenant farmers whose incomes even in years of normal harvests could not

¹This was suggested by Schram, 1966, pp. 88-89.

²The original version of Mao's essay is published in CKNM, No. 2, 1926, pp. 133-145. A revised version is given in Selected Works, I, pp. 13-20. For Mao's claim, see Snow, 1961, p. 161.

³See, for example, the activities of Communists Yuan Hsiao-sen and Huang Chieh in Huai-yang and Hai-kang, Kwangtung. CKNM, No. 3, 1926, pp. 270-292, and No. 5, 532-535.

cover their minimum expenditures.¹ Yet the peasants had at first resisted Peng's attempt to form a union.² It was after months of persistent effort that Peng succeeded in persuading the peasants to get organized. In all likelihood, without Peng P'ai, the peasant movements in Kwangtung would have been delayed. Probably for the same reason, it was no coincidence that the earliest peasant unions in Hunan were also organized by Communists.³ Prior to the upsurge in 1926, active Communist participation in the villages in Hunan was also reported.⁴ Mao himself claimed to have organized the nucleus of the movement in 1925.⁵ By contrast, provinces with slow starts were apparently the very ones that had few cadres dispatched from the Training Institute.⁶

The crucial role of Communist participation at the early stage is not difficult to understand. The Chinese peasants were, by nature, submissive to authority.⁷ Their knowledge of political affairs outside the local community was quite limited. Their attitude toward change was generally passive. They were therefore hesitant to take the first step in a movement that was in many ways revolutionary. Because of their lack of initiative, it was necessary for the Communists to provide the leadership. The latter's aggressiveness, organizational skill, and training in propaganda techniques were precisely what was needed to generate the initial impetus. But while the peasants were indisposed to change, they were generally pragmatic enough to join the movement once the peasant unions demonstrated their capability to

¹Peng, 1926, pp. 64-66.

²For some of the difficulties Peng encountered, see ibid., pp. 251-260.

³Li, 1951, p. 27.

⁴Ibid., pp. 24-25; Chang, 1966, No. 21, p. 87.

⁵Snow, 1961, p. 159.

⁶It can be seen from Table 3 that the three most important provinces in 1926 were Kwangtung, Hunan, and Honan. Kwangtung and Hunan were also the two provinces where an overwhelmingly large proportion of the graduates of the Institute had been sent to work. See CKNM, 1926, No. 2, pp. 177, 182-186, 189-193, 197-199, 203-207. The exception of Honan is explained below.

⁷Yang, 1959, p. 108.

protect their interests. The accelerated rate of growth of union membership in the later phase of development apparently reflected the delayed, snowballing effect of the cadres' pioneering effort. Because the traditional village economy was not a single, integrated economy but a multitude of localized, more or less self-sufficient communities, communications between communities were relatively underdeveloped. Consequently, the spread of the demonstration effect was more sluggish between provinces than between localities within a province. This contiguity element might be a major reason why the peasant movement tended to cluster geographically.

The importance of local Communist agitation must not be over-emphasized. As the Central Committee readily admitted, the peasant movement had been largely a spontaneous development.¹ When Mao evaluated the contributions of the various groups in the movement in Hunan, he credited the peasants with seven of a total of ten points, and "the army and the urban dwellers" with the remaining three.² Mao was the most ardent supporter of the movement and his rather high rating of the peasants themselves was perhaps to be expected. What is interesting is the conspicuous absence of any reference to the Party in Mao's rating. It might well be that in his view the contribution of the Party had been infinitesimal, or at best, much less significant than the peasants. If, indeed, the peasant movement had its own roots largely independent of Communist agitation, what were the principal forces that drove the peasants to get organized?

THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE POWER STRUCTURE AND ITS BREAKDOWN IN THE 1920s

As a working hypothesis, one can perhaps trace the origin of the movement to the changing power structure in the villages. The 1920s had witnessed a breakdown of the traditional self-governing system in many rural areas. As a result the peasants were left without a communal

¹ CCP, "Resolution on the Peasant Movement," Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 296.

² Brandt et al., 1966, p. 83. It is interesting to note that this passage has been deleted in the revised version given in the Selected Works.

organization to take care of their interests. The growth of peasant unions could perhaps be understood as a response to this need. Since the tenant farmers were more vulnerable to political and economic disasters than land owners, their need for communal protection was also greater and therefore they were more inclined to join the union. However, the militarists and the traditional power group in the villages strongly opposed the movement. The different pace of development of the peasant unions in different regions reflected, in part, the varying degrees of success in overcoming the opposition from the militarists and the gentry and, in part, the extent to which the peasants had been able to obtain organizational aid from the Communist cadres. To elaborate this working hypothesis, let us briefly examine the traditional rural power structure, how its breakdown created the need for new institutions, and in what specific ways the peasant unions provided for this need.

In traditional China, the power structure in the villages had two distinctly separate components: a formal structure consisting of the local government at the hsien (county) or the village, and an informal structure consisting of various local organizations. In principle, the monarchial power was absolute. But in practice, formal government administration stopped at the county level, and below the hsien level the informal power structure took over. The state maintained control over the entire rural society at all times. Strict control was essential because the monarch established a new regime by force and had to take steps to prevent others from doing the same.¹ But the management of public affairs was left to the local leaders. The duties of the government officials in the rural areas were limited to collecting taxes, conscription of labor, and settling legal disputes. In brief, it was a system of centralized control and community management.²

¹Wu and Fei, 1948, p. 3.

²Following Schurmann, we distinguish between control and management. "Control means the exercise of restraint over and the checking on human beings to make sure they are doing what is expected or are not hurting the interests of those in power.... Management means operational leadership through organization, and constant directive efforts over men to

In this system the village stood as a highly autonomous self-governing unit.

The major power groups that constituted the local governing unit included the gentry, the clan, the wealthy families in the village, and organizations such as the crop protection association. The power of these groups was not derived from the state but from the social status and wealth of their leaders, and in the case of the clan, from the institutionalized acceptance of the clan authority by the kinsmen. The primary purpose of these institutions was to provide collective effort in matters that concerned the community as a whole. Basically, they performed two major functions. The first was the management of the community affairs, such as maintaining peace and order in the village, irrigation and flood control, construction and repair of roads, operation of the village school, mediation in personal or clan disputes, recreation, and religious and welfare activities.¹ The second was to act as an intermediary between the government and the peasants and to try to moderate the state's demand on the community. These informal power groups played such an important role in the village political life that "no central political power could penetrate effectively into the village without either cooperating with the informal local structure, or controlling it or replacing it with a new one."²

In general, no single organization dominated the local power complex. But usually there was a concentration of power in the gentry and the wealthy families.³ The traditional prestige of literacy and

achieve goals.... The weight of evidence from China's long history indicates that the state was far more oriented toward control than toward management of society." Schurmann, 1966, p. 406. For a description of the rural political order, see: Fei, 1953, pp. 75-90; Yang, 1959, pp. 102-118; Hsiao, 1960; Gamble, 1963, p. 8; and Holcombe, 1930, pp. 10-12. Wittfogel, however, holds the different view that the state played an active role in the material life of the villages by directing and managing the irrigation systems. Wittfogel, 1957.

¹Fei, 1953, p. 81.

²Yang, 1959, p. 116.

³Ibid., p. 115.

their accessibility to government officials were the basis of social authority of the gentry.¹ The gentry played a special role because they could communicate with the higher levels of the central government. If and when the demands of the state became excessive relative to what the community could provide, the gentry would negotiate with the bureaucracy to ameliorate those demands through their kinship and non-kinship ties with those in the central government. The wealthy and the gentry were often one and the same, and even if they were not, they generally belonged to the same landowning class.² There are no statistical surveys of the economic background of the local leaders. But whatever limited data are available do confirm the general observation that the political leaders were mostly landowners. According to a report on 66 districts in Shensi and Honan in the early 1930s, 71 percent of the district directors had more than 100 mow of land per household.³ In another survey of 235 village heads and associate heads in Wuhsi, Kiangsu, 78 percent of them were landlords with an average land holding per household of more than 100 mow, as compared with less than 5 mow for the community as a whole.⁴ That both the wealthy and the gentry were landowners should not be surprising. Land was the most important form of wealth in the villages. Only those who need not work in the fields had the leisure and means to become members of the intelligentsia. In an agrarian economy, this means essentially the landowning class.⁵

The concentration of wealth, social status, and political power in a single group had important implications. The balance of power

¹ Traditionally, the gentry consisted of those who had passed at least the lowest grade of the imperial examinations.

² Fei, 1953, pp. 33-34.

³ Li, 1935, p. 35. The average size of land per farm household in these two provinces was 23 mow (1 mow = 0.1647 acre). Shen-pao Yearbook, 1935, p. 677. The district director was merely one of the new titles for the same group of local leaders. Gamble, 1963, p. 42; Li, 1935, p. 34.

⁴ Li, 1935, pp. 36-37.

⁵ Wu and Fei, 1948, p. 18.

between the wealthy and the poor was so overwhelmingly one-sided that the latter group was virtually defenseless against any oppression by the former. Those in power could, and often did, accumulate wealth by abusing their power.¹ Should there be a conflict between the landed and landless class, there would be little doubt the ruling group would side with the former. Moreover, when the community faced unduly great economic pressure from the state, the wealthy would be in a better position to protect their own interests than others because they could shift part of their burden to the peasants. However, in normal times, the opposition between gentry and peasantry was held within bounds "by the real economic interdependence of the two classes, by the degree of mobility between them, by the cooperation between the two in dealing with the imperial power, and by common ethical principles."²

The traditional system of local self-government was well adapted to a country of China's enormous size, where the communications and transportation were underdeveloped, climate and customs varied from region to region, and rural communities were to a high degree economically self-sufficient. Throughout the centuries the system remained in operation except during brief periods of dynasty change or severe natural disaster. Paradoxically, this system of minimum interference from the state was workable only if the central government could maintain strong political and military control and yet restrain itself from over-taxing the peasantry. In traditional China the transfer of power from one dynasty to another was never an orderly and peaceful process. A weak central government would invite a contest for power and the struggle for the throne would inevitably lead to the disruption of the local self-government which relied primarily on social control rather than physical force to maintain peace and order. If and when the state abused its power by "overburdening" the peasants, banditry and open revolts would result and again there would be a breakdown of peace and order in the villages. In the 1920s, neither of these conditions existed.

¹For example, see Li, 1935, pp. 41-43.

²Fei, 1953, p. 12.

The basic change in the political setting was the disintegration of the monolithic power structure into a number of regional warlords. The revolution of 1911 succeeded in overthrowing the monarchy but failed to replace it with a strong enough central government. The first decade of Republic China witnessed the emergence of many warlords. By the mid-1920s, China was divided into about a dozen territories, each controlled by a warlord. Manchuria was occupied by Chang Tso-lin, the area under the control of the Peking Government (Hopei, Shantung, Honan, and Shensi) by Wu Pei-fu, Shansi by Yen Hsi-shan, Hunan by Chao Heng-ti, Chekiang by Lu Yung-hsiang, Kwangtung by Ch'en Chiung-ming, Yunan by Tang Chi-yao, and Szechuan by Yang Sen and Liu Hsiang. There had been civil wars virtually every year since 1911. In the 1920s the scale of the civil strife very much broadened, often involving more than ten provinces at a time.

A direct impact of the political disorganization was the tremendous economic strain imposed upon the peasants by the militarists. Constant civil wars disrupted normal economic activity and destroyed property. Flood prevention was neglected.¹ Levies were made on the villages for money, food, manpower, carts, and animals, not only to finance the military buildup but also to amass immense personal wealth for the militarists and their officers. Since the warlord, in general, was neither morally bound by the traditional philosophy of moderation nor closely tied to the local group by kinship, the traditional gentry were generally powerless in their attempt to mitigate the demands of the militarists. Even in areas under the control of the Nationalist Government, heavy taxation was inevitable in order to finance the revolutionary war.²

¹ Not infrequently the militarists used the appropriation to support military establishments. For example, Mallory cited the Yellow River flood in 1925 as a case of official negligence due to misuse of public funds. Mallory, 1926, p. 72.

² Even Mao admitted: "As the whole country is not yet unified and the power of imperialism and the warlords is not yet overthrown, it is still impossible to remove the heavy burden of government taxes and levies on the peasants or, to put it more explicitly, the burden of military expenditures of the revolutionary army." Selected Works, I, pp. 55-56.

As a result, the income of the rural population was lowered partly because of lower output and partly because a greater share of the output was taken away by the military governments.

As the central government weakened, the character of the local power structure also changed. Some of the traditional power groups defaulted and fled to the cities to become absentee landlords.¹ Others that remained organized their own armed units. Meanwhile, those who had close political connections with the militarists and those who had military power, such as the local garrison commander, joined the elite. A common feature of the new local elite was that their power stemmed not from social sanction of the community but mainly from the physical force under their control. The traditional moral bond between the power groups and the ordinary peasants had been broken. Although the gentry had lost their power to conciliate the military power, they still received rents, interests, and surtaxes. What had been a cooperative relationship between the two groups now became an antagonistic one. With neither physical force nor organizational support, the peasant was at a most disadvantageous position. The burden of the increased demand from the militarists therefore fell largely on the ordinary peasants.

A third consequence of the political disorganization in the 1920s was the prevalence of banditry. According to a survey of 226 localities in 20 provinces by Buck, bandits were found in 34 percent of the communities surveyed.² Some bandits were peasants driven from the impoverished rural areas to seek a living outside the law. Other were the defeated troops of various warlords. Whatever the origin, banditry intensified the conflict between the peasants and the village power elite. Banditry generated the need for self-defense. The cost of local defense added to the burden of the peasants. Moreover, the local armed units were mostly under the control of the power groups who often used the armed guards as instruments of power against the peasants.

¹Fried, 1953, p. 224; Gamble, 1963, p. 45.

²Buck, 1937, pp. 471-472. See also Mallory, 1926, pp. 75-77.

Under the circumstances the peasants with no close ties to the local elite were in desperate need of a countervailing organization that would provide some protection against the local power groups and perform the duties of a village administration since the local power group no longer functioned effectively as such. It was in response to this need that various organizations appeared more or less spontaneously in the rural areas. The secret society was one such institution. The peasant union was another.

The need for organized group action alone did not necessarily result in a strong peasant movement for local conditions varied. In some provinces such as Kiangsu and Chekiang, the peasant movement was hindered by strong militarists' opposition.¹ In some others such as Shantung, the secret societies flourished.² In still others such as Anhwei, the movement was slow because of lack of Party support.³ But where the opposition was relatively weak and the Communist cadres played an active, catalytic role of organizers as in Kwangtung and Hunan, the movement advanced rapidly.⁴ In Honan, the Communist local organizations were underdeveloped and the province was under the control of the Peking Government. The province still ranked second in terms of the number of peasant unions organized in 1926 primarily because of the large scale conversion of the secret society, the Red Spear Society, into peasant unions.⁵

THE PEASANT UNION AS A COUNTERVAILING BLOC

One oblique way of checking the plausibility of the working hypothesis is to examine what exactly the union had to offer in order to

¹ Peasant Movements, pp. 430-431.

² Ibid., p. 425; Chang, 1957, p. 695.

³ Peasant Movements, p. 433.

⁴ Kwangtung was the revolutionary base of the KMT which supported the movement. In Hunan, most of the local military units had been recruited into the army and therefore the movement met with relatively weak resistance in the villages. Chang, 1966, No. 21, p. 87.

⁵ Peasant Movements, p. 422; Chang, 1957 pp. 696-701.

motivate the peasants to join. Two vivid accounts of the activities of the peasant union by Peng P'ai and Mao throw some light on this problem. Peng described the development of the peasant union in Hai-lu-feng, Kwangtung, in the earlier stage of the peasant movement.¹ Mao reported on the situation in five hsien in Hunan after the Northern Expedition in late 1926 opened an enormous territory for the peasant movement.²

According to Peng, Hai-feng was a county with a relatively high tenancy ratio and a long history of exploitation of the tenants by the landlords.³ Peng therefore closely followed the Communist doctrine of class conflict and began his campaign to organize the landless peasants using rent reduction as the basic issue. For months he made virtually no progress. The peasants' reactions remained largely negative. Some were convinced that nothing could be done to change their fate. Some were interested by skeptical. Some agreed to join but only after the majority had become members. What finally roused the peasants' enthusiasm to join were several incidents that demonstrated how, as an orgainzed group, they could defend themselves against intimidation by other groups whereas as individuals this would not have been possible.⁴ From then on membership in the union rapidly increased.

The major activities of the Hai-feng Peasant Union included the following: First and foremost, it protected the members from being mistreated by the landlords and local bullies.⁵ For example, when the

¹ Peng, 1926. See also reports on other unions in CKNM, 1926, No. 6-7, pp. 656-663.

² Selected Works, I, pp. 13-46. The five hsien were: Hsiang-tan, Hsiang hsian, Hangshan, Liling, and Changsha. See also Ch'i, 1928; and Peasant Movements, pp. 309-321.

³ Peng, 1926, pp. 59-69. The tenancy ratio is defined as the percentage of total farm households that were tenant farmers.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 253-254, 257-260.

⁵ A local bully was generally "the head of an armed gang that terrorized a village or a group of villages by armed extortion; more often than not, he was connected with the underworld or banditry, although he himself did not usually engage in open, lawless acts; he was a swashbuckler in his native village; he frequently beat or even killed people who were in his way or who refused to be fleeced; he was often engaged in the gambling and opium traffic with armed protection and acted in league with corrupt local officials." Yang, 1959, p. 138.

landowner raised rent, threatening to terminate the peasant's tenure, the union would see to it that no other peasants would farm the land. On other occasions, the union effectively defended its members against exploitation by the local bullies in the cities and the bandits in the neighboring areas. Second, the union arbitrated disputes among the members.¹ Traditionally the local gentry performed the function of a mediator, for it was very costly for the peasant to seek legal action through the local courts.² To help the peasants bypass the traditional channels, the union set up an arbitration department and settled many civil and even criminal feuds.³ Finally, the union organized welfare services and community projects. It established a medical clinic and a part-time school, afforested the hills near the village, and arranged recreational activities during the festivals.⁴

The peasant unions in Hunan were much more aggressive in their demands and more violent in pursuing their demands than those in Kwangtung. The peasants attempted to seize total power in the villages, whereas those at the earlier stage only wanted to establish a counter-vailing bloc within the existing political order. In Mao's own words: "The peasants attack as their main targets the local bullies and bad gentry and the lawless landlords, hitting in passing against patriarchal ideologies and institutions, corrupt officials in the cities and evil customs in the rural areas. In force and momentum, the attack is like a tempest or hurricane; those who submit to it survive and those who resist it perish. As a result, the privileges which the feudal landlords have enjoyed for thousands of years are being shattered to pieces.

¹Peng, pp. 259-260, 358.

²Gamble, 1963, p. 2. As one anthropologist describes it: "Nine out of ten families who have sought recourse to the law have had to sacrifice a great part of their small property.... Private mediation has been and is now the most important legal mechanism in rural districts throughout the country. Social justice has been in the past much more important than legal power in protecting the weak against violence of any sort." Yang, 1945, p. 166.

³Peng, 1926, pp. 266-267.

⁴Ibid., pp. 262-268.

The dignity and prestige of the landlords are dashed to the ground. With the fall of the authority of the landlords, the peasant association became the sole organ of authority, and what people call 'All power to the peasant association' has come to pass.¹ Moreover, many peasant unions now possessed their own armed forces which most unions in the earlier days did not have.² Their limited military power was based partly on the armed forces formerly belonging to the landlords, and partly on the peasants' own "spear corps."

But, on the whole, the basic function of the peasant unions remained much the same. First, the unions adopted various measures to protect the members' economic interests.³ In order to benefit the peasants in the low income group, they banned the export of grain from the local area, the raising of the price of grain, hoarding, and speculation. They prohibited any increase in rent and deposits and began campaigning for lower rents and deposits. The unions also forbade any cancellation of leases of land by the owners. Interest rates were generally reduced. Exorbitant levies imposed on the peasants by the former local authorities were abolished or lowered. Second, the peasant unions maintained law and order in the villages by eliminating the bandits. The bandits had now vanished, partly because the peasant union had absorbed many members of the secret societies which usually were an important source of banditry, partly because the problems of food became less serious as the price of grain fell sharply, and partly because the peasant union had some armed forces to enforce peace and order in the rural districts.⁴ The third major function of the peasant union was to substitute for the county magistrate in judicial affairs. The peasants' problems were now settled in the peasant unions rather than in the local courts. Finally, the peasant unions replaced the

¹ Selected Works, I, p. 23.

² Ibid., pp. 41-42.

³ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁴ Mao also listed a fourth factor which might be significant but had little to do with the peasant union: Many of the poor and unemployed had joined the army. Ibid., p. 55.

gentry and the clan in administering community projects.¹ Schools for the peasants were set up. Some consumers' cooperatives and marketing and credit cooperatives were organized. Roads were built and embankments repaired by the landlords at the command of the peasant unions. The unions also prohibited gambling, opium-smoking, and other disliked customs and practices.

The peasant unions were providing two basic services to the peasants in Kwangtung and Hunan. They represented the peasants when conflicts arose between the peasants and other power groups in the villages, and they took over the management of community affairs. Apparently in the political setting of the 1920s, the traditional institutions such as gentry rule, the family system, and the prevalence of social justice were no longer adequate or effective in protecting the individual. The peasant union emerged as an organization that filled the gap.

FARM TENURE AND THE PEASANT UNIONS

Since the basic need for collective security was common to all but the relatively few who could protect themselves, it would be natural for both tenants and owners to join the unions.² One may surmise, however, that the tenants would have a stronger incentive to join because their need for organized protection was generally greater. In the first place, the dispute over rent and the leasing of land remained one of the most common conflicts in the villages. In such a conflict, the bargaining power of the tenant as an individual was generally much weaker than that of the landlord because of the relatively high man-land ratio and because of the traditional political power of the wealthy. In the second place, when both the landlord and the tenant faced the same contingency, such as a flood, banditry, or an increase in taxes, the tenants had less protection than the landlords. They had fewer resources for emergencies. They could not easily seek refuge in the cities like the

¹Ibid., pp. 50-54, 56-58.

²It should be noted that owners and landlords were not necessarily in the highest economic and social class.

landlords because they were literally earthbound.¹ Moreover, their circle of non-kinship ties was smaller because they were close to the bottom of the social ladder and the extent of one's connections generally depended on one's position in the rural society.

The limited information available does not permit any systematic analysis of the relationship between farm tenancy and the peasant movements. However, two simple tests can be made: a comparison of the proportions of tenants and owners who joined the unions, and a scatter diagram showing the percentage of farm households that were tenants and the percentage of farm households that joined the unions. It should be borne in mind that the observations based on these tests are highly tentative because of the crudeness of the data.

Table 4 brings together the participation rate of tenants (that is, the percentage of total tenants who joined the unions) and those of owners, for thirteen hsien in Hunan in November 1926.² Included in "tenants" are tenants per se, tenant-equivalent of semi-tenant, peasants who rented part of the land they cultivated, estimated at one-half of the total semi-tenants, and a relatively small group of hired farm labor. The owners included landlords, owner-operators, and owner-equivalent of semi-tenants estimated at one-half of the total semi-tenants. The number of farm households and its breakdown by ownership status are based on two surveys given in Buck's land utilization study for 1929-1933. Even though the time periods for the union members and total farm households are not the same, it seems unlikely that the number of farm households and its composition by ownership status could have changed appreciably over the relatively short period.

The comparison shows that the percentage of tenants in unions is consistently larger than the percentage of owners in unions for all

¹ Some did migrate to Manchuria and abroad.

² Total union membership in these 13 hsien accounted for 32 percent of the total membership in Hunan.

Table 4
PERCENTAGE OF TENANTS AND OWNERS IN PEASANT UNIONS,
13 HSIEN, HUNAN PROVINCE, 1926

Hsien	Tenants in Unions	Owners in Unions	Tenants in Total Farm Households
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Hsiangtan	91.1	77.8	85.0
Hengyang	67.1	11.5	55.6
Liling	73.9	34.0	73.2
Ninghsiang	44.4	34.4	77.5
Hengshan	37.9	14.3	70.0
Yiyang	17.0	12.0	58.9
Ichang	75.2	23.6	62.5
Leiyang	24.9	12.7	60.0
Changteh	28.5	21.2	43.6
Wukang	33.6	3.6	35.1
Hainhua	29.0	9.8	20.0
Changning	10.5	3.4	53.0
Linhsiang	35.6	3.9	12.2

Sources:

Peasant Movements, pp. 258-260; Buck, 1937 (Statistics), pp. 58-59, 418. The group of part owners is broken down into owners and tenants on the assumption that each constituted one-half of the total.

localities.¹ On the average, more than half of all the tenants were in unions, as compared with about 14 percent of the owners in unions. The marked difference in the participation rates seems to suggest that the tenants had a higher propensity to join the peasant unions than the owners.

Conceivably, the inequality may exist in localities where the absolute number of tenants is much smaller than the number of owners. Or it may be found in localities where the reverse is true. Clearly the second case is more significant, because the higher the tenancy ratio (the percentage of total farm households that were tenants), the higher will be the participation rate of the farm households as a whole.² For this reason I calculate the tenancy ratio for the 13 hsien given in column (3) in Table 4. The results show that in nine out of the 13 localities there were more tenants than owners.

An indirect test of the participation rates for tenants and owners can also be made by comparing the tenancy ratio in unions with the corresponding ratio in total farm households. If the tenancy ratio in

¹Note that the classification of peasants by land ownership given in Buck's survey does not specify whether hired farm labor is included as tenants. If hired farm labor is not included, and if an adjustment is made to exclude hired farm labor in unions in the calculation, the same findings still hold, except for one locality.

²The following hypothetical example illustrates the two possibilities:

	<u>Case I</u>	<u>Case II</u>
Number of union members		
Tenants	5	50
Owners	10	1
Total	15	51
Number of farm households		
Tenants	10	100
Owners	100	10
Total	110	110
Percent of farm households in union		
Tenants	50	50
Owners	10	10
Total	14	46

unions is greater than that in total farm households, then the participation rate for tenants is also greater than the participation rate for owners.¹ This indirect test can be applied to observations for 19 hsien in Kwangtung and 52 hsien in Hunan. The results are shown in Table 5. Two complications in the comparison should be noted. First, it is not clear whether hired farm labor was included as tenants in the tenancy ratio of total farm households. Hence two ratios of tenancy in unions, one including and the other excluding hired farm labor, are calculated. Second, the statistical coverages of the two ratios are not exactly the same.² But the crudeness of the data is not likely to alter appreciably the broad conclusion that the percentage of tenants in unions was considerably higher than in total farm households. Again, the comparison suggests a higher propensity for tenants to join the unions than owners.

For 53 hsien in five provinces, data on tenancy ratios and participation rates for all farm households are available.³ Figure 1 shows a scatter diagram relating the two variables. Focusing first on the

¹This can be shown as follows. Let T_u , O_u , be the numbers of tenants and owners in unions; T , O , the total numbers of tenants and owners; and U , P , the total numbers of union members and total farm households, respectively. All numbers are non-negative, and $P > T$; $P = T + O$; $U = T_u + O_u$.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{If } T_u/U &> T/P \\ \text{then } PT_{11} &> TU - TT_u \\ PT_u - TT_u &> TU - TT_u \\ T_u(P-T) &> T(U-T_u) \\ T_uO &> TO_u \\ \text{i.e. } T_u/T &> O_u/O \end{aligned}$$

²The tenancy ratio for total farm households is based on data for only nine of the 10 hsien in south Kwangtung, and two of the five hsien in Huaichow area, one of the six hsien in Haifeng area plus four neighboring hsien (Hsingning, Wuhua, Hsienyang, and Chow-an), and 13 of 52 hsien in Hunan.

³They include 13 hsien in Hunan, 31 in Kwangtung, four in Hupeh, four in Honan, and one in Hopei.

Table 5
TENANCY RATES IN UNIONS AND IN TOTAL FARM
HOUSEHOLDS, KWANTUNG AND HUNAN, 1926
(percent)

Province	Union Members Being Tenants			Farm Households Being Tenants	
	Including Hired Farm Labor	Not			
		Including Hired Farm Labor	Farm Household Being Tenant		
Kwangtung					
Southern Kwangtung, 10 hsien	80	76	65		
Huaichow area, 5 hsien	78	76	54		
Haifeng area, 6 hsien	65	61	59		
Average	75	71	62		
			(59)		
Hunan					
Average, 52 hsien	80	75	58		
			(62)		

Sources:

Tenancy rates in unions are calculated from data given in CKNM, No. 6-7, 1926, pp. 763, 796; Chang, 1957, p. 686; Peasant Movements, pp. 258-262. Tenancy rates in total farm households are based on data given in Shen-pao Yearbook, 1935, pp. K: 28-29; Peng, 1926, p. 63; Buck, 1937 (Statistics), pp. 58-59. Averages are weighted averages, the weights being total farm households in each region given in Buck, 1937 (Statistics), pp. 418-419. Figures in parentheses are the average tenancy rate for the province as a whole taken from Wu, 1944, p. 141.

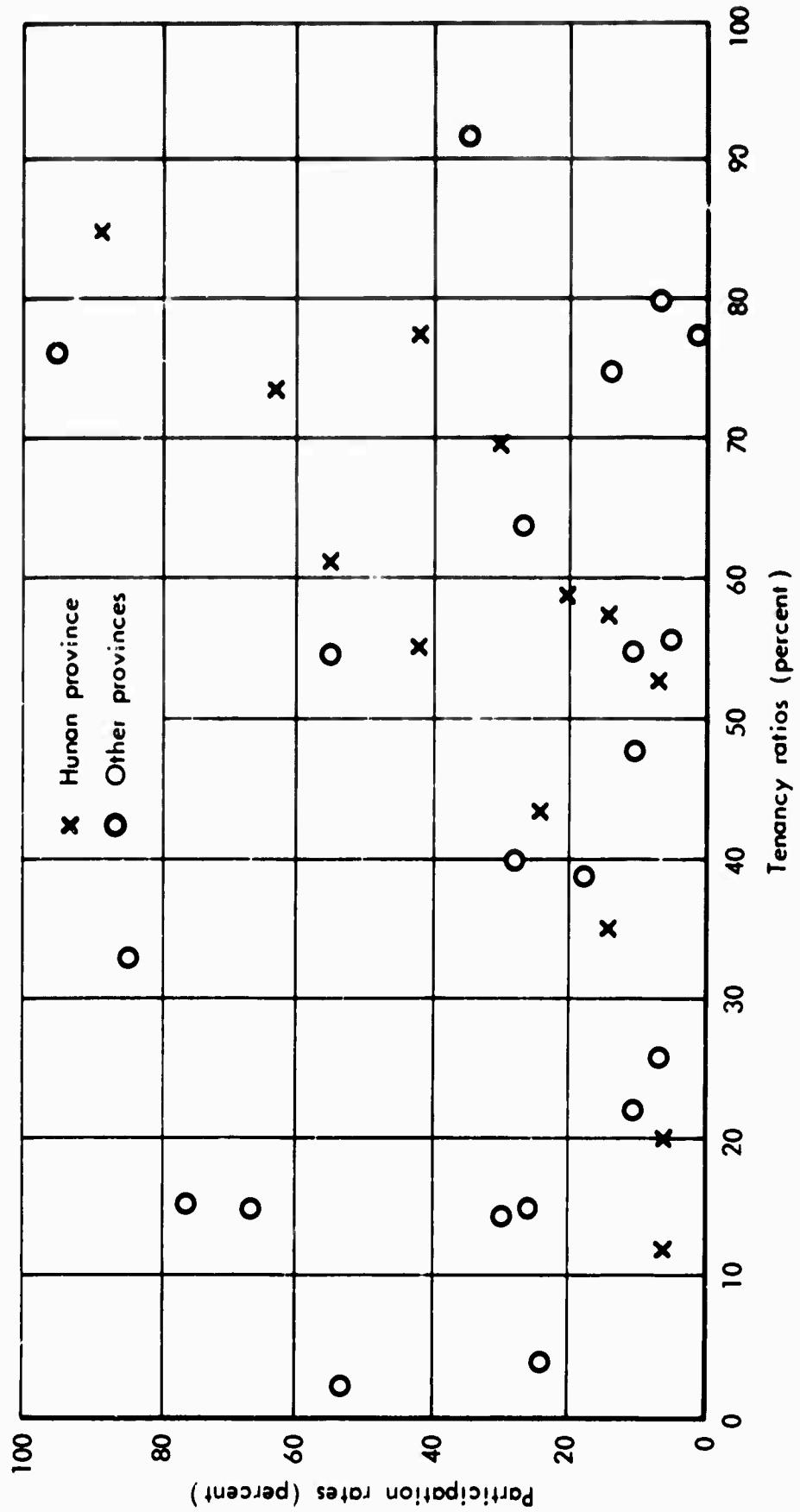


Fig. 1—Tenancy ratios and participation rates, 36 hsien in five provinces

13 observations for Hunan, one notices a positive relationship between the tenancy ratio and the participation rate. In localities with a relatively large percentage of tenant farmers, the size of union membership was also larger. More interestingly, the diagram suggests a non-linear relationship. A regression of tenancy ratio on the participation rate would show a curve convex to the origin, with a relatively small curvature where the tenancy ratio is high. This indicates that where the tenancy ratio is low, the participation rate is not sensitive to differences in the tenancy ratio over a fairly wide range. But the sensitivity is much stronger where the tenancy ratio is relatively high. There appears to be a threshold beyond which the tenancy ratio tends to be much more significant. Possibly the traditional conservatism and timidity of the tenant peasants noted earlier might be part of the explanation. In areas where the tenants were a minority, only a few enterprising ones would join the union. The rest would adopt a wait-and-see attitude. In areas where the tenants formed a large group, the very size of the group might have encouraged the more apprehensive ones in the group to climb on the bandwagon.¹

However, when one considers the 53 observations for the five provinces as a whole, the scatter diagram shows no discernible relationship between the tenancy ratios and the participation rates. This raises the question of why the tenancy ratio seems to matter in Hunan and not in other provinces. One possible explanation, in terms of the working hypothesis, is that the participation rate depended also on Communist agitation and the relative strength of opposition from the local and provincial power groups. The diagram shows the combined effect of all these factors, and in certain localities, the effect of the other factors might have reinforced, neutralized, or reversed the effect of the tenancy ratio.

Two other hypotheses can be advanced to explain the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon. China is a large country, and it should not be surprising to find peasants in different regions reacting to a given

¹This tendency has been noted by Mao, in Selected Works, I, p. 21.

situation differently. In some areas, there was a positive relationship between the tenancy ratio and the participation rate because the tenants tended to be more radical.¹ The more tenants in the community, the more activists and therefore a larger proportion of the population joining the peasant unions. However, an inverse relationship may exist in other regions where the degree of the peasant's dissidence depended on his attitude toward his own social and financial position relative to those around him. In areas with low tenancy ratios, the tenants may be more radical because, being the relatively few "underprivileged" in the community, they might be particularly sensitive to the difference and therefore tend to have higher aspiration levels. On the other hand, in areas with high tenancy ratios, the tenant might be less radical because he did not feel as conspicuously underprivileged since most peasants around him were in more or less the same position. From the standpoint of the owners, a low tenancy ratio would mean a less serious threat to them and therefore they would tend to adopt a more liberal attitude and to tolerate the organization of peasant unions. The reverse would be the case if the owners were surrounded by large groups of tenants.

The other possible explanation is that the distribution of land ownership reflected the distribution of income. A high tenancy ratio meant a larger proportion of the peasants in the low income group. Where the disparity in owners' and tenants' incomes was substantial, and where the income of the majority of the tenants was close to the subsistence level, the tenants might have a high propensity to join the unions because the incentive to improve their economic conditions through organized effort would be stronger. However, the relative incomes of the tenants varied from region to region. In some areas, the absolute level of income of the tenants in normal times might be considerably higher than the subsistence level, so that the pressure for change might be less even though the tenancy ratio was high.²

¹Mao, 1926, p. 23.

²The relation between relative income and dissidence is more complicated than is presented here.

Whatever the cause of the peasant movement, its impact on the course of the Communist movement was profound. It greatly intensified the conflict between the Party's two antagonistic policies of revolution from above and revolution from below, and left a distinct imprint on Mao's revolutionary strategy. To these two main problems we now turn.

IV. THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF THE ENTENTE

CCP STRATEGY, JULY 1926 TO APRIL 1927

During the period between the launching of the Northern Expedition in July 1926 and the final breakdown of the coalition in July 1927, the fundamental problem confronting the Communist Party was the intensifying conflict between its two policies of simultaneously preserving the two-party alliance and pressing for an agrarian revolution. This section traces the shifting Party line designed to resolve the conflict and examines the strategy laid down by the Comintern in 1926, the major developments in late 1926 and early 1927 that compelled the Comintern to change its course, the controversies over the agrarian revolution in Moscow and Hankow, and the events leading to the final collapse of the entente.

In July 1926, the Central Committee of the Communist Party convened to review its policy toward the KMT and the masses in the wake of the Northern Expedition. Up to the time of the Plenum, the guiding principle of Communist policy had been laid down by the Comintern in its "Theses on the China Question" adopted by the Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI on March 13, 1926.¹ The Comintern instructed the CCP to continue its alliance with the KMT, support the formation of a revolutionary army, strengthen the organizational structure of the CCP, draw the peasants into the national liberation movement, and develop the Party into a mass organization of the Chinese proletariat by opening its membership to workers. The Comintern warned against "right liquidationism," which failed to appreciate the independent class tasks of the Chinese proletariat, and against "ultra-left sentiments," which tended "to skip the revolutionary-democratic stage of the movement and to turn at once to tasks of proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power, leaving entirely out of account the peasantry."

Like most Communist documents, the "Theses" was discursive, couched in broad terms and covering many problems. But one could perhaps detect

¹ Eudi and North, 1957, pp. 347-350.

a shift of emphasis toward revolution from below. The Comintern was apparently heartened by the political developments of the recent past. The workers' strikes following the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 developed into a nationwide movement against Russia's two staunch enemies in the Far East, England and Japan. The KMT had become a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and the urban democracy, as evidenced by its condemning the Right and absorbing more Communists into its upper hierarchy at the Second KMT Congress in January 1926. The Canton Government had become "a model for the future revolutionary-democratic structure of the country." In short, the revolution was progressing smoothly, particularly the revolution from above. The Comintern therefore instructed the Communists to turn their attention more to the peasantry, which the Comintern considered the most important problem.

On March 20, 1926, seven days after the Comintern adopted its resolution, Chiang Kai-shek staged a military coup against the Communists and the Soviet advisers. The coup apparently came as a total surprise to Moscow. It shattered the high hopes of the Comintern and posed the basic question of the CCP's relationship with the KMT now that the military power within the KMT had taken its first decidedly anti-Communist move. The Canton branch of the CCP proposed a break with the KMT but was vetoed by the Central Committee in Shanghai. Instead of a total break, Ch'en Tu-hsiu proposed that henceforth the CCP should cooperate with the KMT as a bloc without, rather than as a bloc within the KMT.¹ Moscow rejected Ch'en's proposal and insisted on continuation of the alliance. At this moment, the leaders in Moscow saw a greater danger in a possible alliance between Japan and Great Britain against the Soviet Union than in the rise of Chiang to power.² Shortly after the coup, Chiang had reaffirmed his intention to remain on good terms with the Soviet Union. Moscow therefore saw no need for the Communists to break off relations with the new KMT leader. Moreover, the question also involved power politics within the Soviet Communist Party. In the

¹Ch'en, 1929, p. 430.

²Brandt, 1958, pp. 72-78.

struggle between Trotsky and Stalin, the China question had become an issue. Earlier, Trotsky had opposed collaboration with the KMT and advocated immediate formation of Soviets in China, while Stalin and Bukharin, the chief architects of the ECCI Theses, had high praise for the KMT and called for continued support of the KMT by the Communists. To reverse the policy would be to admit that Stalin had been wrong. For these reasons, Moscow did its best to tone down the significance of the coup and instructed the CCP not to withdraw from the KMT, on the grounds that it would lose contact with the masses and yield the banner of revolution to the bourgeoisie.

Despite the Communist failure to respond to the coup, relations between the two parties remained tense because of disagreement over the Northern Expedition. Even before the coup on March 20, 1926, Chiang had decided to launch a military campaign northward to Hankow and then turn eastward to capture the southeastern provinces along the Yangtze Valley. Stalin opposed the idea for fear that such a campaign might provoke foreign military intervention.¹ Accordingly, Communist leaders, such as Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Chang Kuo-tao, spoke out against the Northern Expedition.² But Chiang was determined to go ahead. As the KMT prepared for the campaign, all power gravitated into the hands of Chiang. He became the commander-in-chief of all the revolutionary forces and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the KMT. In July 1926, he launched the campaign.³

The problem confronting the Communist Second Enlarged Plenum in July 1926 was how to carry out Moscow's instructions regarding revolution from above and promoting peasant movements from below, in this new political setting. The central question was the Party's relation

¹ Degras, 1956, II, p. 276.

² Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "On the National Government's Northern Expedition," Hsiang-tao chou-pao (Guide Weekly), July 7, 1926, reprinted in Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 175-178; Chang Kuo-tao, "Kwangtung in the Eyes of the People," Hsiang-tao chou-pao (Guide Weekly), June 20, 1926, reprinted in Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 172-175.

³ Actually, military maneuvers began as early as May 1926. Wilbur and How, 1956, p. 367.

with the KMT. Closely following Stalin's orders, the Central Committee in its Political Report of July 1926 made it clear that not only was an open break undesirable, but also that the Communist Party should restrain itself from being too hostile toward Chiang. "Do we want the bourgeoisie to continue to join us in the Revolution? Our answer is that for the time being we must still utilize the bourgeoisie. The reason is that if attacked too severely, the bourgeoisie would be drawn completely into the imperialist camp. This would further strengthen the enemy at the cost of the Revolution."¹ The Central Committee identified four political groups within the KMT, each representing a different social force: (1) the reactionary Right (for example, Sun Fo, Feng Tzu-yu) who allied themselves with the militarists, bureaucrats, the gentry and imperialists; (2) the center (for example, Chiang Kai-shek, Tai Chi-t'ao) who represented the bourgeoisie; (3) the Left (for example, Wang Ching-wei, Kan Nai-kuang) representing the middle and petty merchants; and (4) the Communists representing the workers, peasants and students.² The CCP's policy toward the KMT was "to unite with the Left and force the Center to attack the reactionary Right."

The Party's policy toward the peasantry was outlined in the Central Committee's Resolution on the Peasant Movement.³ The Resolution called upon the Party members to secure control of the leadership in the peasant movements and laid down guidelines for their organizational and propaganda work in the villages. However, the overtones of the Resolution were notably less radical than the Comintern Resolution of March 1926. While the Party members should participate actively in the peasant movements, excessive radicalism was to be avoided. The Central Committee pointed out that "the peasant movement has developed the disease of left deviation everywhere. Either the slogans are extreme or action is excessively left-inclined. Consequently, the peasants

¹ CCP, "Political Report of the Central Committee," in Wilbur and How, 1956, pp. 274-275.

² Ibid., pp. 273-275.

³ Ibid., pp. 296-303. In addition, the Central Committee also adopted resolutions on the labor movement, the Red Spear Movement, the merchant movement, the women's movement, the student movement, and the military movement. Ibid., pp. 288-317.

themselves often suffer great damage before the enemy has been hit."¹ To correct this tendency, the Party adopted a more moderate policy designed to minimize possible conflicts between the peasants and the landlords, the gentry and the local militia. It did not demand land redistribution in its political platform. It only demanded that the government set a rent ceiling not to exceed 50 percent of the output. The Party policy toward different classes in the villages was to unite the owner-operators, hired farm laborers, tenant farmers, and middle and small landlords in a united front. Thus the organization of peasant unions could not have a distinct class color. Only large landlords not tilling their land and those extorting high interest were to be excluded from the peasant union. Even the large landowners were to be differentiated. Those who did not actively engage in oppressive activities were to be neutralized. Only the "reactionary" big landlords were to be attacked.

The Central Committee did not demand the replacement of the local government by the peasant union, only the popular election of self-governing organs and hsien magistrates. It did recognize the need to arm the peasants, but it limited its use strictly to self-defense and specified that the defense organization could only be a temporary establishment lest conflict arise between the armed peasants and the local armed units. The Party was resigned to the fact that the min-tuan (the local militia) could not be destroyed and attempted only to "disseminate propaganda among members of the min-tuan not to cooperate with bad gentry." The Party members were also told to avoid any conflict with the church, "the vanguard of imperialism."

In sum, the program for the revolution from below emphasized caution. Apparently the Party was faithfully following Moscow's post-coup instruction that the entente with the KMT must take priority over the agrarian revolution.

However, two new developments emerging from the Northern Expedition soon made it difficult for the Communists to implement the policies

¹ Ibid., p. 277.

formulated by the Central Committee. Within the KMT, a split between the Left and the Center was in the making. In the villages, the peasant movements were advancing so rapidly that the CCP soon lost control of them.

In July 1926, the military campaign against the warlord Wu Pei-fu began and progressed steadily more or less according to plan. The revolutionary army captured Changsha in Hunan on July 10, Hankow and Wuchang in Hupeh in October. By November, it took Nanchang in Kiangsi and was heading toward Nanking and Shanghai. At this time, the power centers of the revolutionary forces scattered over various parts of the country. The Party Central of the KMT and the National Government remained in Canton. The Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief was Nanchang, Kiangsi. The Central Committee of the Communist Party was in Shanghai. In November 1926, some members of the KMT Central Standing Committee and government officials reached Nanchang and decided that Nanchang should be the temporary seat of the government. Shortly afterward some members of the Left, with the support of Borodin and Tang Sheng-chih (the military commander occupying Hankow), organized a Joint Council to exercise the supreme power of the party in Wuhan. On January 1, 1927, the KMT Central Committee and the National Government moved to Wuhan.

The disagreement over the seat of government was the first open skirmish between the KMT Left and Chiang Kai-shek. At Wuhan, a new alignment of political forces against Chiang was formed. The various groups wanted to curb his power for different reasons. The Left was opposed to the concentration of both civilian and military power in the hands of Chiang. Borodin and the Communists were still bitter over the anti-Communist activities of Chiang and were wary of his tendency toward reconciliation with the Western countries. Tang Sheng-chih had personal ambitions to become the military leader of the revolutionary army.¹ The conflict soon developed into a struggle between the Party dominated by the Left at Wuhan and the military force under Chiang at

¹Chang, 1966, No. 19, pp. 95-96.

Nanchang. At the Third Plenum of the KMT Central Executive Committee in March 1927, the Party resolved to reorganize the top leadership in an attempt to dilute Chiang's power and to place it under Party control. In exchange for Communist support, the KMT Left made some political concessions to the Communist Party. Two Communists were elected to the Central Standing Committee. The KMT at Wuhan implicitly recognized the CCP as an independent party.¹ Two Communists also joined the government as heads of the Agriculture and Labor Departments, thus opening the way for Communist participation in the central government.

Earlier, to strengthen the KMT Left, the Communists had initiated the movement to recall Wang Ching-wei from abroad. In April, Wang arrived in Shanghai and issued a joint statement with Ch'en Tu-hsiu, calling upon members of both parties to cooperate with each other. Wang reaffirmed the Wuhan policy of alignment with the Communist Party and guaranteed not to expel the Communists or to suppress the unions. In return, Ch'en pledged his support and agreed not to take over the foreign concessions in Shanghai by force. Shortly afterwards, Wang left for Wuhan to become the leader of the KMT Left.

Chiang's response to the new coalition was to launch a series of anti-Communist purges, first in Kiangsi and later more decisively in Nanking, Shanghai and Canton. On April 18, 1927, the members of the KMT Central Standing Committee in Nanking resolved to set up a national government and to make Nanking the national capital. Thus Chiang formally broke with the KMT Left.

The impact of the schism on the CCP was two-fold. First, the purge brought heavy losses to the Communist-controlled unions and the Communist Party itself. The strength of the Party in the urban centers was thus very much weakened. Second, the split within the KMT rendered obsolete Moscow's earlier instruction to maneuver the Center to the Left. No such maneuvering was possible now that the Center and the

¹The Plenum adopted the "Program for the Unification of the Revolutionary Forces" which stipulated that a joint conference of the KMT and the CCP should be convened immediately to discuss the general methods of cooperation. Kuo, 1966, p. 226.

Left had parted ways. The coalition with the KMT turned into a coalition with the Left at Wuhan, a political force that was much friendlier toward the Communists but militarily much weaker than Chiang. But by this time even coalition with the Left became increasingly difficult. The peasant movements in Hunan and Hupeh, the very base of the Wuhan Government, had been making great strides, and the demands and militant activities of the peasants began to shake the Wuhan regime to its foundations.

As noted earlier, at the beginning the peasant unions were organized primarily as a countervailing power to manage the peasants' community affairs. While their basic functions remained the same, the nature of their activities became more and more violent and aggressive. As late as December 1926, the peasants in Hunan only strived to reduce rents, interest rates, and taxes.¹ Mao's report on peasant activities in January and February 1927 made no mention of any demand for land redistribution.² But before long, the peasant unions in Hunan began to tackle the land problem on their own. In some villages where the landlords made excessive claims as to the size of land, the peasants took more accurate measures and thereby eliminated the overassessments. Others redistributed the lease among the peasants to provide opportunities for unemployed peasants. The more militant unions confiscated land from the landlords and divided it according to the size and age of the members of each farm household.³ In Hupeh and Kiangsi, the same demands for redistribution of land began to appear in some areas.⁴ Similarly, many peasant unions were organized at first to counterbalance the lopsided power structure in the villages, but in the course of their struggle the peasants completely reversed the situation and

¹"Resolution of the First Provincial Conference of Peasants in Hunan," in Peasant Movements, p. 368.

²Mao did bring up the land problem once in his report. But he was expressing an opinion rather than reporting on what actually happened. He stated: "An economic struggle should also be started immediately in order that the land problem and the economic problems of the poor peasants can be completely solved." Selected Works, I, p. 47.

³Peasant Movements, pp. 307-308.

⁴Ibid., p. 402; Chiang, 1963, p. 356.

suppressed the traditional power groups. The members were unarmed at the beginning but soon organized their own armed units. In early 1927 about 200,000 members of the peasant unions were armed.¹ Once armed, the peasants conflicted with the local militia, and demonstrations and protests often degenerated into revolts and violence.

As a direct consequence of the social and political upheavals in the Hunan villages, relations between the CCP and the Wuhan regime were severely strained. Government revenues, which came largely from the land tax, fell off because the flight of the landlords from the villages made collection difficult.² The peasant unions' prohibition of free shipment of grain caused a shortage of grain supply and prices rose in the cities.³ Worse still, the army officers under Tang Sheng-chih were mostly Hunanese and were related to the gentry and landlords in the rural areas.⁴ The attack on the landowners inevitably offended the officers.⁵ Since Tang's army formed the military base of the Wuhan regime, the Communist Party had to curb the peasant movement which had antagonized the army, or risk a break with the Wuhan regime. The choice was between revolution from above and from below, between collaboration with the Wuhan KMT or independent development, between a national revolution without the peasantry or an agrarian revolution without the urban bourgeoisie. Opinions as to what strategy to follow were sharply divided among leaders of the CCP, among the Soviet advisers in China, and among the Soviet leaders.

INTER- AND INTRA-PARTY DISPUTES OVER THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

The controversy within the CCP, and between the Communists and Kuomintang, centered around two specific issues: had the peasant

¹ Peasant Movements, p. 6.

² Report of the Head of the Financial Bureau of the Hunan Government, quoted in Li, 1966, p. 677.

³ Chiang, 1963, pp. 273-274.

⁴ Chang, 1966, No. 20, p. 90; Chiang, 1963, p. 294.

⁵ In a report to the Comintern, Ch'en Tu-hsiu stated that 90 percent of the troops came from Hunan, and that the whole army was hostile toward the peasants for the latter's radical activities. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "Telegram to the Comintern," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 338-340.

movements gone too far, and what kind of a land reform program should be adopted. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Chang Kuo-t'ao, and Chu Chiu-pai advocated more restraint in the peasant movements and a more moderate land policy. Mao and Ts'ai Ho-shen took the opposite stand favoring a radical agrarian revolution.

The group opposing the peasant movement charged that the movement was "an awful mess," that it had gone too far, that it was "a movement of the riffraff," and that it caused a reduction in government revenue.¹ Therefore, the movement should be curbed. According to a report by three Soviet representatives, up to March 1927 the Central Committee under Ch'en held on to the policy of curbing the struggle in the villages.² "The Central Committee considered the peasants' confiscation of land a dangerous infantile disease of Leftism." In a Special Conference of the Central Committee in Hankow on December 13, 1926, the Party decided that the slogan of establishing the peasants' power must not be raised so as not to frighten away the petty bourgeoisie, and that there was no need to arm the peasants.³

Ch'en's policy was openly challenged by Mao.⁴ During January and February 1927, Mao toured the villages in Hunan, and later prepared a report vigorously defending the movement.⁵ Answering the charge that the movement was a mess, he stated:

The fact is ... that the broad peasant masses have risen to fulfill their historic mission, that the democratic forces in the rural areas have risen to overthrow the rural feudal power.... To overthrow this feudal power is the real objective of the national revolution.... This is a marvelous feat which has never been achieved in the last forty or even thousands of years. It is very good indeed. It is not a mess at all.⁶

¹ Ch'en, 1929, p. 444; Li, 1951, p. 28; Selected Works, I, pp. 24-28.

² Nassonov et al., "The Letter from Shanghai," in Trotsky, 1967, p. 411.

³ Ibid., p. 412.

⁴ Mao first spoke out for the peasant movement before the Hunan Peasants' Conference in December 1926. Li, 1951, pp. 27-28.

⁵ Selected Works, I, pp. 21-59.

⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

Had the peasants gone too far in their attacks on the local gentry? Mao did not think so. He admitted that "the peasants do in some ways act unreasonably. They impose fines on the local bullies and bad gentry and demand contributions ... swarm into (their homes), slaughtering their pigs and consuming their grain. They may even loll for a minute or two on the ivory beds of the young mesdames and mademoiselles in the families of the bullies and gentry. At the slightest provocation they make arrests, crown the arrested with tall paper hats, and parade them through the villages." But, to say that they had gone too far is erroneous. For "the things described above have all been the inevitable results of the doings of the local bullies and bad gentry and lawless landlords themselves. For ages these people, with power in their hands, tyrannized over the peasants and trampled them underfoot; that is why the peasants have now risen in such a great revolt." More important, "revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows another.... To put it bluntly, it was necessary to bring about a brief reign of terror in every rural area; otherwise one could never suppress the activities of the counter-revolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry."¹

According to Mao, the riffraff in the villages were the poor peasants. Since the poor peasants were not afraid of losing anything, they became the vanguard of the revolution, and they had won the leadership of the peasant association. "This leadership is absolutely necessary.... To reject them is to reject the revolution. Although some of the poor peasant leaders certainly had shortcomings in the past, most of them have reformed themselves by now."²

Apart from his answers to the various charges, Mao also listed fourteen "great deeds" by the peasant unions to emphasize the positive aspect of the peasant movement.³ The revolutionary strategy that Mao had in mind is clear. He saw in the near future the rise of the peasants "like a tornado or tempest, a force so extraordinarily swift and

¹ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

² Ibid., pp. 31-33.

³ Ibid., pp. 33-59.

violent that no power, however great, will be able to suppress it."¹ Millions of peasants would join the unions and the unions would be controlled by the poor peasants who "accepted most willingly the leadership of the Communist Party."² If the Party would only lead, rather than oppose and criticize the movement, the rise of the peasantry could be developed into a powerful political force with the Party in control. He therefore urged the Party to provide strong support to the peasant movement, to replace the gentry and the landlords with the peasant unions as the local power center, and to arm the peasants. "All kinds of arguments against the peasant movements must be speedily set right. The erroneous measures taken by the revolutionary authorities concerning the peasant movement must be speedily changed."³

The Kwangtung Branch of the CCP supported Mao's idea of a radical agrarian program.⁴ So did Ts'ai Ho-shen in his proposal for peasant uprisings in Hunan and Hupeh.⁵ But at that time, most of the Communist leaders took the position that the activities of the peasants had gone too far.⁶ The reaction of the Central Committee to Mao's proposal was rather negative. The Communist official organ, Hsiang-tao chou-pao (The Guide Weekly), published only part of Mao's report. Ch'en Tu-hsiu appeared personally before the Political and Military Academy at Hankow to explain the official policy that the relatives of the military servicemen and their land would be protected.⁷

Surprisingly, the KMT Left seemed to side with Mao instead of with the Communist Central Committee. In March 1927, the Third Plenum of the KMT was held in Wuhan under the control of the Left wing. The main

¹ Ibid., p. 22.

² Ibid., p. 31.

³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴ Chang, 1966, No. 21, p. 86.

⁵ Ts'ai, 1927, pp. 579-580; Li, 1951, p. 31.

⁶ Chang, 1966, No. 21, p. 85.

⁷ T'ao Hsi-sheng, "Ch'en Tu-hsiu," in Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Ch'en Tu-hsiu chih-shu (A Self-written Account of Ch'en Tu-hsiu), Wang-chia Publishing House, Taiwan, 1968, p. 1.

purpose of the Plenum was to reassert the Party's power over the army under Chiang. The peasant movement was considered a potential instrument of power in their contest; accordingly, the Plenum adopted a resolution on the peasant movement and a manifesto to the peasants that came rather close to Mao's basic ideas.¹ The resolution supported the establishment of self-government by the peasants, reduction of rent, and arming the peasants. In one major aspect, the KMT Left went even further than Mao. It pledged support of the peasants' demand for land and called upon the government to punish and confiscate the land of corrupted officials, local bullies, bad gentry and all counter-revolutionists.

On April 2, the Wuhan Government set up a Land Commission to draft a program for land redistribution.² Mao was appointed one of the five members of the Commission.³ Three questions were at issue: Should land be redistributed in the first place? If so, should all or part of the land be redistributed? And, if only part of the land was to be redistributed, what was the criterion to decide whose land was to be confiscated for distribution?

The group that opposed a land reform included Ho Chien, the army general under Tang Sheng-chih, and Tan Yen-kai and Ch'en Yu-jen, two members of the KMT Central Political Committee. Ho Chien was against land confiscation because it would undermine the morale of the soldiers and officers since most of them were landowners.⁴ Tan was against it for fear that any redistribution of land might lead to chaos in the villages. Ch'en rejected the idea because it would give the imperialists the impression that the Wuhan Government had turned into a Communist regime.⁵

But the majority of the Communists and KMT leaders in Wuhan favored redistribution. The reason was simple. They all looked to

¹ Wang, 1965, pp. 254-259.

² Chiang, 1963, p. 278.

³ The other four were: Hsu Chien, Koo Mung-yu, Tan Ping-shan, and Teng Yen-ta.

⁴ Chiang, 1963, p. 294.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 303-304.

land reform as the panacea for the regime's pressing problems. As Mao explained: "Although the revolutionary forces are still progressing, we have reached a critical stage. Without a new army, the revolution would f ... In order to build a new army, we must solve the land problem. By solving the land problem, we also solve the financial problem and the problem of manpower supply. Whether or not the servicemen would permanently take part in the revolution also depends on the land problem. This is because the soldiers would fight courageously to protect their own land."¹ The very idea of locating a new source of financing the military expenditures seemed so promising that even the military commander, Tang Sheng-shih, agreed to have a land reform program.²

There was, however, some disagreement as to whether a total or partial land redistribution should be carried out. Some extremists, including the Communists Peng Tse-hsiang and Ts'ai Ho-shen, argued for the confiscation and redistribution of all land.³ But most others, including Mao, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Wang Ching-wei, and Borodin, advocated a more limited but flexible program.⁴ The controversy then centered around the question of whose land was to be confiscated. The Commission finally arrived at two major decisions: First, land belonging to large landowners and public land was to be distributed among the landless and poor peasants.⁵ Land of the small landowners and revolutionary

¹"Minutes of the First Enlarged Conference of the Land Commission," quoted in Chiang, 1963, p. 284.

²Ibid., p. 295.

³Ibid., p. 292; North and Eudin, 1963, p. 74.

⁴Chiang, 1963, pp. 297-300. The minutes of the meetings of the Land Commission show that Ch'en Tu-hsiu's stand on the land issue does not correspond to what the Maoist historians describe. Some writers charged that Ch'en was unwilling to accept Mao's views. Selected Works, I, p. 21. Actually, at least at this moment, Ch'en supported the idea that the peasants' power should be established, and that the program proposed by Mao should be implemented as soon as the provincial party committee and the provincial peasant union adopted it. Chiang, 1963, p. 300.

⁵The two decisions were given in the "Draft Resolution on the Land Problem," in Chiang, 1963, pp. 300-302. The document was based on an earlier version drafted by Mao and other members of the Commission. Ibid., pp. 286-287.

soldiers was to be protected. A small landowner was generally defined as one having not more than 50 mow (slightly over 8 acres) of fertile land or 100 mow of poor land. In a separate resolution, the Commission also called for the confiscation of the land belonging to the enemies of the national government, such as "warlords, corrupt officials, local bullies, bad gentry and all counter-revolutionists."¹ Since large landlords were relatively few in the areas controlled by the Wuhan Government, the program was directed mainly against the "enemies of the government." In the latter case, there could be no precise and objective criteria. In principle, the government and the local self-governing unit had the power to confiscate and control the land of the counter-revolutionists.

Second, perhaps anticipating a bitter struggle in the villages over the land reform, the Commission proposed the strengthening of the peasants' power by reorganizing the local administration, by arming the peasants (with 5 to 10 percent of the munition output), and by suppressing the reactionaries in the villages.

The Draft Resolution on the Land Problem was not adopted by the KMT Central Political Committee. However, the Communists in Hunan proceeded to carry out the program regardless of the decision of the KMT.² The intensity of the land revolution in Hunan was indicated by the fact that even small landowners were hurt in the implementation of the program.³ As Ch'en Tu-hsiu later admitted, the peasant movements were somewhat "infantile" and the attempt to redistribute land caused great anxiety among the Hunanese officers.⁴ Thus, contrary to the expectations of the Wuhan regime and the Communist Party leaders, land reform only deepened the crisis.

¹ Ibid., p. 305.

² Ibid., pp. 306, 307.

³ Peasant Movements, p. 320.

⁴ Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "The Hunan Coup and the Campaign Against Chiang," Min-kuo jih-pao (Min-kuo Daily), Hankow, June 20, 1927, quoted in Chiang, 1963, p. 326.

The events that set off the debate among the Communist leaders toward the end of 1926 also led to a re-evaluation of the Comintern policy in Moscow. Up to November 1926, there was no disagreement between Ch'en Tu-hsiu's cautious policy and the Comintern line. In a revealing statement, Stalin disclosed that as late as October 1926 the Comintern ordered the CCP to hold back the peasant movement until the capture of Shanghai in order not to antagonize the KMT generals during the Northern Campaign.¹ But hardly a month later, Moscow shifted its position.

At the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI during November 22 to December 26, 1926, the Comintern drafted a new set of instructions that emphasized strong Communist support of the agrarian revolution.² According to the ECCI, the Chinese revolution was to go through three successive stages, each marked by a different realignment of social forces: The driving force in the first stage was the national bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie intelligentsia. In the second stage, a coalition of the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and a section of the capitalist bourgeoisie formed the social basis of the revolution. In the third stage, the driving force would be a bloc of still more revolutionary nature, that is, a bloc of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the urban petty bourgeoisie, but without the capitalist bourgeoisie. The leadership would then pass more and more into the hands of the proletariat. At this moment, the revolution was in its second stage. The alignment of social forces called for the same dual strategy of pushing forward the agrarian revolution to draw the peasants into the struggle, and making use of the bourgeoisie that remained engaged in the revolution. But greater emphasis must be given to the revolution from below.

"The agrarian question is the central question. The class that gives a radical answer to the question will be the leader of the

¹ Stalin, "The International Situation and the Defense of the Soviet Union," in Chang, 1965, p. 215.

² ECCI, "Theses on the Situation in China," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 131-145.

revolution. In the present situation, the proletariat is the only class that is in a position to carry on their radical agrarian policy."¹ Accordingly, in areas controlled by the national government, the Communist Party and the KMT must immediately carry out radical measures that would attract the peasants into the revolutionary struggle. Included in these measures were: reduction of rent to a minimum, confiscation of monasterial and church land and land belonging to anti-government landholders, a guarantee of perpetual lease to tenant farmers, and disarming the local militia and arming the poor and middle peasants. The CCP must support the attempt to overthrow the established regime in the villages and replace it with peasant committees chosen from the lower strata of the peasantry.

The importance of the peasant problem demanded that the CCP should stay in the KMT to make use of the government machinery as an effective way to reach the peasantry. The CCP must therefore penetrate the government in the newly liberated areas, so as to carry out the radical agrarian program. The CCP must also strive to develop the KMT into a solid revolutionary bloc by struggling against the KMT Right, supporting the formation of a Left wing, and preventing the Center from shifting to the Right.

At this point, the Soviet leaders seemed to have grossly underestimated the seriousness of the potential conflict between a radical agrarian program and close collaboration with the KMT.² The Plenum Theses declared: "To refuse to assign to the agrarian revolution a prominent place in the national-liberation movement, for fear of alienating the dubious and disloyal cooperation of a section of the capitalist class, is wrong. This is not the revolutionary policy of the proletariat. The Communist Party must be free of such mistakes."³

¹ Ibid., p. 137.

² "Soviet leaders" refers to the group whose views were incorporated in the Theses. The group included Stalin, Bukharin, Roy, and Budnov. Trotsky and Mif held different views. For a summary of the controversy, see below.

³ North and Eudin, 1963, p. 138.

To implement its new policy, the Comintern sent Roy to China in early 1927. Roy arrived at Hankow in April. He soon engaged himself in a heated debate with Borodin. By now the peasants were becoming more and more militant. On April 12, 1927, Chiang staged a coup in Shanghai to purify the KMT. Roy proposed a strategy to "deepen" the revolution by pressing ahead with the agrarian revolution and consolidating the revolutionary base covering such provinces as Hunan, Hupeh, Kwangtung and Kwangsi. The essential feature of Roy's strategy was that revolution from below must take precedence over revolution from above. "The Chinese revolution will either win as an agrarian revolution or it will not win at all." He therefore emphasized the establishment of peasant power in the villages and the creation of a truly revolutionary army independent of the landowning generals. A corollary of this strategy was that the Wuhan regime should defer its plan to launch a military campaign against the warlords in the north, not only because the agrarian revolution had the priority, but also because it was based on the precarious assumption that Fung Yu-hsiang and Yen Hsi-shan, two warlords in the north, would join the revolution, and because it would provide an opportunity for the Nanking Government to attack Wuhan. Instead, the Wuhan regime should recapture Kwangsi and Kwangtung in the south now under the control of Li Chi-shen.

By contrast, Borodin believed it necessary to broaden rather than deepen the revolution. The primary task at this stage of the revolution was not to organize the masses but to maneuver the petty bourgeoisie. He therefore urged the CCP and the Wuhan regime to launch a military campaign against the warlords in the north and postpone any drastic action in the villages until the capture of Peking. In short, the national revolution must come before the agrarian revolution. In order not to antagonize the landowning generals, he argued for restraining the peasant movements and redefined agrarian revolution in terms of rent reduction and self-government in the villages, leaving out such radical measures as arming the peasants and land redistribution.¹

¹Chiang, 1963, p. 336; Ts'ai 1927, pp. 576-577.

The disagreement between Roy and Borodin divided the Communist leaders further over the land issue. Tan Ping-shan and Chang Kuo-tao were in favor of Roy's proposal to launch a southward expedition. Probably Mao was on Roy's side at one time in view of his strong stand on the issue of agrarian revolution.¹ Ch'en Tu-hsiu, P'eng Shu-chih, and Chang Tai-lei supported Borodin. Chu Chiu-pai, however, preferred a third alternative of marching eastward to attack Chiang. On the agrarian issue, Chu was even more strongly against the peasant movement than Ch'en Tu-hsiu.²

With so many divergent views within the leadership, it was not surprising that the Communist policies vacillated back and forth. On April 16, 1927, the Central Committee decided to defer the northward campaign in order to consolidate its base as Roy suggested. But two days later, it reversed itself and went along with the Wuhan Government's decision of launching a northward campaign. At the same time,³ the Central Committee adopted a strong agrarian policy.

On April 27, 1927, the Fifth Party Congress convened at Hankow. The Congress failed to resolve the differences over the basic question: whether or not the entente with the KMT Left should be continued. Ch'en Tu-hsiu argued for, and Ts'ai Ho-shen against, maintaining the alliance.⁴ The Congress finally decided to continue its dual policy with somewhat greater emphasis on revolution from below, apparently at the insistence of Roy. The Congress set forth three major tasks: (1) "At the present stage, the chief aim of the revolution is to destroy the very roots of the reaction in order to consolidate the victory. This will be achieved by carrying out a program of radical agrarian reform and by the establishment of the revolutionary-democratic power in the village."⁵

¹ However, according to Roy, at least on one occasion, Mao sided with Ch'en rather than with Roy. See below.

² Ch'en, 1929, p. 444.

³ North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 63-64.

⁴ Wang, 1965, pp. 360-361.

⁵ CCP, "Theses on the Political Situation and the Tasks of the CCP," in North and Eudin, 1963, p. 248.

But, "the basic aim -- defense and intensification of the bases in the south and in the center -- does not preclude the necessity or the possibility of expansion in all directions."

(2) The Communist Party should maintain close ties with the KMT. But the CCP must share not only the responsibility but also the power. "The Communist Party can be neither a subservient appendage nor the opposition with respect to the KMT."¹

(3) The third major task before the Party was to organize an army. "The development of the revolution demoralizes the ranks of the militarists, and their less reactionary elements join the revolutionary army. In the final account, however, the subsequent development of the revolution threatens the interests and the power of the Left militarists. As a result, they either thwart the development of the revolution, or turn against it. These unreliable elements cannot constitute the only armed force of the revolution. The revolution must create its own army. An agrarian revolution would create a social base for a genuine revolutionary army. The peasants will join the army to defend what they have gained, thanks to the revolution."²

In its Resolution on the Agrarian Question, the Party stated that "a radical solution of the agrarian problem requires a fundamental redistribution of land based on the principle of equalization. This is not feasible as long as land is not nationalized. The Communist Party will lead the peasantry in its struggle for an equalizing distribution of land."³ At the present stage, the land reform program included only the following measures:⁴

(a) "Confiscation of all communal ancestral, temple, and school lands, and lands belonging to the Christian Church, as well as company-owned real estate, and the transfer of such land to the peasants who

¹ Ibid., p. 250.

² CCP, "Resolution on the Agrarian Question," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 254-263.

³ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴ Ibid., p. 262.

till them. The management of all confiscated lands must be assigned to land committees which will decide whether to cultivate the confiscated lands on communal principles or to divide it among the laboring peasants.

(b) Landlord estates which have been rented to tenants shall be confiscated without redemption and transferred, through the land committees, to the peasants who cultivate them. Land belonging to small owners shall not be confiscated. Land belonging to officers of the revolutionary army is likewise not subject to confiscation.

(c) The landlords and the gentry shall be deprived of all political rights and power. Village self-government responsible to the village assembly shall be established and draw support from the oppressed classes of the village.

(d) The military forces of the village reaction shall be disarmed and a peasant militia organized for the protection of the village government and the gains of the revolution."

What was Mao's reaction to the Party's decision on the land problem? Two accounts, presumably both of first hand experience, give diametrically opposite impressions. According to Roy, in a meeting of the Communist Politburo shortly after the Congress, Mao argued that the Resolution adopted by the Fifth Congress was a mistake.¹ He supported Ch'en's more moderate proposal to curb the peasants so as not to upset the united front with the KMT Left. He was reported to have said: "Irresponsible members of the Communist Party are misleading the peasantry. We must not develop social revolution in the villages and weaken the rear of the national army."² In short, Mao had completely reversed his early position in his Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement.

But according to Mao himself, he was dissatisfied with the Party's Resolution not because it was too radical, but because it was too moderate. As he recalled:

¹ M. N. Roy, "Mao Tse-tung: A Reminiscence," New Republic, September 3, 1951, pp. 14-15.

² Ibid., p. 15.

When I reached Wuhan, an inter-provincial meeting of the peasants was held, and I attended it and discussed the proposal of my thesis, which carried recommendations for a widespread redistribution of land.... A resolution was passed adopting my proposal for submission to the Fifth Conference of the Chinese Communist Party. The Central Committee rejected it.... He (Ch'en Tu-hsiu) did not understand the role of the peasantry in the revolution and greatly underestimated the possibilities at this time. Consequently, the Fifth Conference failed to pass an adequate land program. My opinions, which called for rapid intensification of the agrarian struggle, were not even discussed, for the Central Committee, also dominated by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, refused to bring them up for consideration. The Conference dismissed the land problem by defining a landlord as 'a peasant who owned over 500 mow of land' -- a wholly inadequate and unpractical basis on which to develop the class struggle, and quite without consideration of the special character of land economy in China.¹

One possible explanation of the contradiction was that basically Mao had consistently advocated a radical agrarian revolution but that he was ready to retreat from this position as a temporary tactical maneuver. Mao made one such maneuver in his attempt to rally both the radical and the moderate groups to accept his draft resolution at the Land Commission. Apparently Mao's immediate objective was to induce the Wuhan regime to adopt an outwardly mild land policy but flexible enough to permit drastic action against the landlords. Judging from the draft resolution itself, and Mao's effort in its preparation, one would assume that Mao had mellowed somewhat. For his draft resolution was in many aspects less extreme than the Resolution passed by the Fifth Congress. The fact was that he intended to use the draft resolution to legalize the confiscation of land by the peasants themselves.² In areas such as Hunan where the peasant movements were highly developed, he advocated confiscating all land belonging to those holding more than 30 mow, a criterion far more liberal than the

¹ Snow, 1961, pp. 161-162.

² Mao's speech before the Second Meeting of the Land Commission quoted in Chiang, 1963, p. 282.

500 mow limit in the Resolution of the Fifth Congress.¹ Similarly, Mao's support of Ch'en and his negotiation with Wang Ching-wei after the Changsha incident might well be his tactical moves rather than a change in strategy.

The dispute among the Communist leaders was, in a sense, superfluous; the ultimate decisionmaking power as to what course the Party should take did not lie with the CCP itself but with the Comintern, or more precisely, with the Soviet leaders. In Moscow, however, there was also a heated debate over the same issue of revolution from above versus from below, between Stalin and Trotsky who had been engaged in a power struggle since Lenin's death.² The disagreement over the revolutionary strategy in China was part of the overall conflict between Stalin's policy to build socialism in one country first, and Trotsky's demand for immediate overthrow of capitalism. Earlier, the May Thirtieth Incident (in 1925) had aroused high hopes in the Kremlin. The CCP was expanding rapidly and was developing into a serious political force. Trotsky believed the time had come for the CCP to take an independent route to power. This meant withdrawal from the KMT, the formation of soviets, expanding the agrarian movement, and organizing its own military force.

Stalin opted for a revolution simultaneously from above and below, with the former as the primary objective. He believed it vital for the CCP to join forces with the KMT to fight against the warlords who, in his view, were the Chinese representatives of imperialist power. Immediate formation of peasant soviets would be premature. The Chinese Communists should raise the question of the nationalization of land and satisfy the peasants' most urgent demands by legal action. Instead of building its own army, the CCP should infiltrate and gain control over the KMT army.

¹ Mao's report on the land investigation before the Third Meeting of the Land Commission, quoted in Chiang, 1963, pp. 287-290. The CCP Resolution given in North and Eudin, 1963, contains no definition of large landlord. The 500 mow limit was cited in Snow, 1961, p. 162.

² For Stalin's views, see his selected works on China in Chang, 1965, pp. 93-248. For Trotsky's writings on this issue, see Trotsky, 1967, pp. 17-121.

Despite Chiang's coup on March 20, 1926, which seemed to confirm Trotsky's warnings, the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI adopted Stalin's approach in November 1926. In early 1927, Stalin's views vacillated somewhat between supporting the rising peasantry and preserving the alliance with the KMT Left. The coup of April 12, 1927 and the peasant revolts in Hunan again brought the question into sharp focus. In May 1927, a bitter dispute over the Comintern's China policy took place in Moscow.¹ Again Stalin triumphed over his opposition. The Eighth ECCI Plenum adopted a resolution based primarily on Stalin's program of simultaneously seeking hegemony within the KMT and mobilizing the masses.² "The ECCI decisively denies any opposition between the tasks of the national revolution and the tasks of the proletarian class struggle."³ The ECCI therefore insisted that the Party continue to support the Wuhan Government. Since the KMT banner was still "the most weighty political factor in the country," to leave the KMT was to let the banner fall into the hands of the bourgeois leader. Instead of withdrawing, the CCP should secure a leading role within the KMT.

The equally important task was "to draw the vast working masses into the struggle.... Agrarian revolution, including confiscation and nationalization of the land ... is the fundamental internal socio-economic content of the new stage of the Chinese revolution ... and the Communist Party should put itself at the head of the movement and lead it."⁴ But, "the ECCI does not consider it appropriate at the present time to advance the slogan of soviets."⁵

¹ Within the Soviet Communist Party the battle line was drawn between Stalin and Bukharin on one side, and Trotsky and Zinoviev on the other. Treint and Togliatti, members of the Sub-Committee of the Chinese Commission of the ECCI, were also critical of Stalin's policy of holding back the peasants.

² "Extracts from the Resolution of the Eighth ECCI Plenum on the Chinese Question," in Degras, 1956, II, pp. 384-390.

³ Ibid., p. 387.

⁴ Ibid., p. 386.

⁵ Ibid., p. 389.

BREAKDOWN OF THE ENTENTE

While the ECCI Plenum was still debating what revolutionary strategy for the CCP to follow, the long simmering feud between the peasants and the army burst into the open. On May 13, 1927 Hsia Tou-yin, a division commander under Tang Sheng-chih, joined forces with Yang Shen, the warlord in Szechuan, and revolted against the Wuhan regime. They declared that their goal was to purge the Wuhan Government of all Communists.¹ Hsia failed to capture Wuhan. But it shook up the Communist Party. On May 18, 1927, the CCP issued a declaration of the Chinese Communist Party on the revolt in an attempt to win back the confidence of the army. The CCP admitted that there were excesses in the peasant movements. But, "the excesses were not caused by the Communist Party.... The policy of the Communist Party is not directed against the petty bourgeoisie.... If the petty land-owners are satisfied with a fixed rent, guaranteed by the government, and restrain themselves from counteracting the peasant movement, then the peasantry will not touch them." To reassure the KMT leaders, "the Communist Party proclaims herewith its loyalty to the national government and declares its intention to support the revolutionary alliance with the lower middle classes and defend their interest."²

The Communist declaration failed to deter the military officers from taking further action. On May 21, 1927, Hsu Ke-hsiang, the garrison commander at Changsha, disarmed all the Communists, executed some Communist leaders and dissolved all Communist organizations. To retaliate, the Communists and the armed peasants in the neighboring hsien planned an attack on Changsha but were restrained by the Communist Provincial Committee. A small group failed to receive the restraining order, launched the attack, and was crushed.³ A third blow came a week later when Chu Pei-teh, commander of the Third Army in Kiangsi, dismissed all the political commissars from his army.⁴

¹ Li, 1966, pp. 694-695.

² CCP, "Declaration of the Chinese Communist Party," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 286-290.

³ Li, 1966, p. 703.

⁴ Chiang, 1963, pp. 354-368.

The Communist leaders fully recognized that the basic cause of the conflict was the hostility of the officers toward the peasants. Ch'en Tu-hsiu openly admitted that the peasants had gone too far in dealing with the gentry and landlords.¹ But the opinions of the leaders were divided as to what policy to follow. Clearly the decisions of the Fifth Party Congress and the resolutions of the Comintern were no longer applicable because both prescribed a dual policy, and under the circumstances the Party had to choose between supporting the peasant movement or supporting the KMT officers. Roy, Ts'ai Ho-shen and Ch'en Tu-hsiu proposed a break with the KMT.² Ts'ai Ho-shen drafted a plan for peasant uprising in Hunan and Hupeh.³ Borodin and Chu Chiu-pai, however, argued for sacrificing the peasant movement in order to preserve the coalition with the KMT Left.⁴ Borodin contended that all the trouble was caused by excesses in the peasant movement which were actually led by the riffraffs and the secret societies. Agrarian revolution should aim at no more than rent reduction, lower interest rates, and self-government. The CCP should openly declare its support of government decrees to curb the peasant movements.

The decision of the Party at this point was to prepare for abandoning the revolution from above. On June 1, 1927, the Central Committee adopted a resolution drafted by Ts'ai Ho-shen which called for uprisings in Hunan and Hupeh, confiscation of land and preparation to overthrow the Wuhan regime.

On the same day, a telegram from Stalin arrived with instructions to (1) seize land in the villages, (2) curb the peasant movements through the peasant unions, (3) replace the old KMT members with new blood chosen from the worker and peasant leaders, (4) mobilize 20,000 Communists and 50,000 workers and peasants and immediately organize

¹ Ibid., p. 326.

² Ch'en, 1929, p. 431.

³ Ts'ai, 1927, p. 579.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 576-578.

them into a new army, and (5) set up a military tribunal composed of noted KMT members to punish those officers who repressed the workers and peasants.¹

The telegram clearly indicated Stalin's ignorance of the political reality in China and his naive assumption that the CCP could maneuver the KMT and the peasant movements at will. To confiscate land and to curb the peasantry were in themselves contradictory policies, for land redistribution would generate antagonism of the officers, a result diametrically opposite to what curbing the peasant movement was designed to achieve. Would the KMT submissively permit the restructuring of their party membership by the CCP? Would they punish the military officers, their very basis of power, in order to appease the Communists? Where could the CCP find arms to equip the 70,000 men in a hurry? Apparently these questions had not been carefully weighed by Stalin. According to Chang Kuo-tao, all the Communist leaders and the Soviet advisers for once were of the same opinion that Stalin's instructions could not be carried out.²

On June 3, 1927, the CCP issued an open letter to the KMT demanding the punishment of the reactionaries. The Communists pointed out, perhaps with some wistfullness, that "the army cannot as a whole be hostile to agrarian reform. The majority of the army, its most important component parts (the soldiers, the low-ranking officers, and the leaders) will be loyal to the Kuomintang and the national government.... The Kuomintang must not hesitate for a minute in choosing its path. The path of agrarian reform is the path of the revolution."³ At the same time the CCP issued an appeal to the peasants to rise against the warlords in Changsha.⁴

¹ Stalin, "The International Situation and the Defense of the Soviet Union," in Chang, 1965, pp. 228-229.

² Chang, 1966, No. 23, p. 89; Ch'en, 1929, p. 434.

³ CCP, "Letter to the Central Committee of the KMT," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 314-317.

⁴ CCP, "Appeal to the Peasants," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 318-320.

To the Wuhan Government, the overriding concern was not the reaction of the Communists but the attitude of the army generals toward the incidents. The fact that the armed uprising of the peasants at Changsha was so easily crushed reinforced their belief that the army was a more important source of power than the peasantry.¹ At this moment, Wang Ching-wei was planning a military campaign against Chiang. The Communists and the peasants were expendable, but the military forces were not. When the generals refused to take any punitive action against Hsu Ke-hsiang, Wang Ching-wei decided not to meet the Communists' demands.²

In order to bid for more time, and perhaps encouraged by Wang's move against Chiang, the CCP backed down, though not without strong opposition from Roy, Ts'ai Ho-shen and Jen Pai-shih.³ On June 3, in a conference with Wang Ching-wei, Mao admitted that the peasants did harass the relatives of the soldiers but put the blame on the secret society.⁴ He reached an agreement with Wang that the Changsha problem was not to be settled by force.

The rationale of the decision was explained in a letter to the Shanghai Committee of the CCP. According to the Party leaders, there were two alternatives open to the CCP in order to carry out Stalin's dual policy. "One could do what we are now doing in settling the Hunan problem (it was decided that in the struggle against Hsu Ke-hsiang, we ourselves would confiscate the land from the large landlords and give arms to the peasants). This is an independent policy." The party was aware of the possible consequence of this policy. "If we continue to insist on the confiscation of land and on the arming of workers and peasants, the result will be an immediate break with

¹Chiang, 1963, pp. 344-345.

²Wang Ching-wei's report before the KMT Central Political Committee, quoted in Li, 1966, pp. 707-708.

³Ts'ai, 1927, pp. 581-582.

⁴Chiang, 1963, pp. 347-348.

the KMT, and the immediate break with the KMT will mean the immediate liquidation of our party."¹

The second alternative was to wage a militant anti-imperialist movement in Shanghai to force the foreign powers to occupy Nanking and Shanghai. The purpose was to start a new anti-imperialist war. "This war will lead directly to the necessity of arming peasants and workers and to the confiscation of land. With this high wave, the internal reaction will not dare rear its head. The tendency toward a split will be thwarted. There can be no doubt that this high wave will crush the forces of Chiang Kai-shek, will destroy the hegemony. Consequently, this tactic is more correct and necessary."² Therefore, on June 23, 1927, the Central Committee instructed the Shanghai Committee to prepare for the movement in a month.³

Before the new plan could be put into effect, Ho Chien, a Wuhan general, demanded an open break with the Communists.⁴ To prevent bloodshed, the Central Committee hastily disbanded the Communist workers troops in Wuhan. In a final effort to save the alliance, on July 1, 1927, the Central Committee issued a declaration recognizing the leadership and control of the KMT over the workers and peasant organizations.⁵ But the generals insisted on a split.⁶ On July 14, the Comintern denounced the CCP leaders as opportunists and instructed the latter to follow the same old dual policy with only a minor alteration: the CCP should demonstratively leave the Wuhan Government but they should not leave the KMT. They should build "a fighting illegal party apparatus," and further develop the agrarian revolution and systematically arm the

¹ CCP, "Letter to the Shanghai Committee," in North and Eudin, 1963, pp. 363-364.

² Ibid., p. 364.

³ According to the Party's circular letter to all members of the Party on August 7, 1927, the instruction was given on June 19 instead of June 23. Kuomintang, 1964, p. 453.

⁴ Chiang, 1963, pp. 395-396.

⁵ CCP, "Circular Letter to All Party Members," in Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 464-465.

⁶ Chiang, 1963, p. 400.

workers and peasants.¹ The CCP withdrew from the Wuhan Government as instructed. On the following day, Wang Ching-wei reported the contents of Stalin's June 1 telegram before the KMT Central Committee which then decided to expel the Communists.² The entente had finally come to an end.

The split left the CCP in a dejected state. The worker movement had virtually collapsed. In the villages the peasants were suppressed by the military and the landlords. About the only strength the Communists had was the army division under Yeh Ting at Nanchang.³ The Party decided to stage an armed uprising, and then to march southward to establish a base in Kwangtung.⁴ The decision to move to Kwangtung was based on three main considerations. In eastern Kwangtung, the enemy forces were relatively weak, peasant movements had been quite successful in that area, and there was the seaport, Swatow, through which the Party could maintain connections with Moscow. The first two points came close to what Mao later regarded as the essential conditions of a revolutionary base. But the leaders still anticipated Soviet aid, whereas Mao would have emphasized self-support.

At this time the Comintern had sent Besso Lominadze and Heinz Neumann to replace Roy and Borodin.⁵ The Soviet representatives did not support or stop the uprising. The Comintern instruction was to go ahead if there was some chance of success. On August 1, 1927, the uprising was carried out by Ho Lung and Yeh Ting in the name of the "Revolutionary Committee of the KMT." The major theme in the platform

¹"Extracts from an ECCI Resolution on the Present Stage of the Chinese Revolution," Degras, 1956, II, pp. 392-396.

²Li, 1966, pp. 736-740.

³The army under Yeh had no hostility toward the Communists mainly because most of the men were from Kwangtung and therefore were indifferent to peasant militancy in Hunan. Chang, 1966, No. 24, p. 92.

⁴For an account of the Nanchang Uprising, see C. Martin Wilbur, "The Ashes of Defeat," China Quarterly, No. 18, April-June 1964, pp. 3-54.

⁵Roy was recalled to Moscow in early July. Borodin left shortly afterward.

of the Committee was land reform.¹ The land reform program provided for confiscation of land from large landlords with land holdings exceeding 200 mow.² Little did the leaders know that such a land reform was of no significance because landlords with 200 mow or more were extremely rare in Kwangtung. Subsequently, several changes in policy were made while the uprising was in progress. In any event, the program served only as a slogan, for the Communists had no opportunity to carry out any land reform. The uprising lasted for about two months. The Communist troops fought their way to Kwangtung but were totally defeated.

A few days after the Nanchang Uprising began, an emergency conference was called by Lominadze on August 7, 1927, attended by Mao, Chu Chiu-pai, Hsiang Chung-fa, Chang Tai-lei, and others. Two major decisions were made. The first was to replace Ch'en Tu-hsiu with Chu Chiu-pai as secretary of the Party. Members in the Politburo were also changed.³ Second, the Party adopted a new strategy of armed insurrection. Apparently at Stalin's insistence, the uprisings were to be organized under the banner of the KMT, but still no soviets were to be established at the present time.

The abrupt shift of policy seemed to have been a response to a number of urgent needs caused by the breakdown of the coalition. In Moscow, to meet Trotsky's attack, Stalin proclaimed that a higher stage of the revolution had arrived, and called for uprisings which he hoped would turn defeat into success.⁴ Chu Chiu-pai, the new Party secretary, was eager to consolidate his leadership with radical measures dramatically different from the past policies. In addition, to many Party

¹ Chang, 1966, No. 25, p. 95.

² There was considerable disagreement over the land policy. Teng Chung-hsia and Tan Ping-shan opposed confiscation of land from large landlords for fear it might provoke their attack and divide the troops. Li Li-san and Yun Tai-ying argued for confiscation. Others debated over the definition of "large landlord." Li, 1927, pp. 494-496.

³ According to Chang Kuo-tao, the seven new members were: Chu Chiu-pai, Su Shao-cheng, Li Wei-han, Chang Tai-lei, Hsiang Ying, Hsiang Chung-fa, and Lu Fu-tan. Chang, 1966, No. 27, p. 96. Mao was an alternate member.

⁴ Brandt et al., 1966, pp. 101-102.

members the uprising provided a relief to their long suppressed feeling against the KMT.¹

Following the August 7 meeting, the Party staged two uprisings. The first was the Autumn Crop Uprising in Hunan.² In August, the Party drafted a plan for widespread urban and rural revolts in Hunan and Hupeh, where millions of organized peasants were expected to rise at the call of the Party.³ Mao was sent to Hunan to direct and organize the uprising. He set up a plan that almost totally revised the Central Committee's original program. The Central Committee insisted that the uprising be carried out in the name of the KMT, that no soviet be established, that the slogan for land policy be restricted to confiscation of the land of large landlords, and that the peasants themselves must be the main force behind the uprising. But Mao planned to sever all relationship with the KMT, to organize a soviet immediately, to confiscate all land, and to assign a leading role to the organized military forces rather than to the masses.⁴ Three regiments were formed, with recruits from the peasantry, the Hangyang miners, and the insurrectionist troops of the KMT. On September 8, 1927, the armed uprising broke out. The Communists occupied several hsien but did not attack Changsha as planned. A few days later the revolt was crushed. Mao was captured but escaped. He took what was left of his troops, about a thousand strong, to Chingkanshan in the border areas between Kiangsi and Hunan.

The second uprising was the revolt in Kwangtung. But this time the Central Committee had reversed its previous position on the formation of soviets. In October 1927 the Party instructed Peng P'ai to organize an uprising at Hai-lu-feng. On November 7, the first soviet

¹Chang, 1966, No. 27, p. 98.

²For an account of the Autumn Crop Uprising, see Roy Hofheinz, Jr., "The Autumn Harvest Insurrection," China Quarterly, No. 32, October-December 1967, pp. 37-87.

³CCP, "Resolution on the Plan for Uprising in Hunan and Hupeh," in Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 503-506.

⁴Snow, 1961, p. 167.

was established in Hai-feng.¹ On December 11, 1927 the Communists staged another revolt in Canton. Yeh Ching-ying's army took over Canton and formed a Kwangtung Soviet Government which lasted only three days. The Communist forces fled to Hai-feng and were later exterminated. The new strategy of rural and urban uprising had completely failed. The Party was driven underground and henceforth a dichotomy began to emerge between the Party center at Shanghai and the group of military outcasts in Chingkanshan. The two followed different paths. It was the latter that eventually led the Communists to power.

¹ For a brief account of the Hai-lu-feng and the Canton uprising, see Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 506-509; Hsiao Tso-liang, "Chinese Communism and the Canton Soviet of 1927," China Quarterly, No. 30, April-June 1967, pp. 49-78.

V. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE BASIC ELEMENTS
OF THE COMMUNIST STRATEGY

A revolutionary strategy, as conceived by the Communists, generally contains two basic elements: first, the Party leaders' perception of the major class conflicts at the present stage of development on the basis of which the immediate objective, the primary enemies, and the principal revolutionary forces are identified; and second, a program specifying the Party's central tasks in the mobilization and deployment of the principal forces, and the Party's relation with other social and political groups. In Table 6, the essential elements of the various policies adopted by the Party during 1921-1927 together with Mao's strategy are summarized.

Table 6 shows that in the period under study the Communist strategy had undergone some drastic changes. When the Party was founded in 1921, it adopted a general line that emphasized the labor movements. This was followed by a united front policy during 1922-1923. Beginning in 1924, the Party formed a coalition with the KMT as a bloc within the KMT. When the relation with the KMT deteriorated to the point of open rupture in 1927, the Party, in desperation, resorted to armed insurrection. Looking at the period as a whole, one can discern a marked shift of emphasis, from the urban proletariat to the peasant as the principal ally of the Party, from a revolution primarily from above to a revolution from below, from coalition with the KMT to independent establishment of soviets against the KMT, and from organizing mass movements to developing a military force. However, the important changes did not come about until the break with the KMT was imminent. For the most part, the strategy that dominated the Communist movement of this period was the coalition policy dictated by Moscow.

In retrospect, the Communist historians had described this stage of the Communist movement as a "brilliant rehearsal of the Chinese revolution."¹ To a certain degree, the episode was highly instructive

¹Ho, 1959, p. 171.

Table 6

BASIC ELEMENTS OF CCP REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY, 1921-1927

	CCP First Congress 1921	CCP Second Congress 1922	CCP-KMT Alliance 1924-1927	Emergency Conference 1927	Mao 1927-1928
I. Nature of the revolution	Proletariat revolution	Bourgeois-democratic revolution	Bourgeois-democratic revolution	Bourgeois-democratic revolution	Peasant revolution
(1) Objective = to overthrow	Capitalists	Warlords and Imperialists	Feudalists, war-lords and imperialists	KMT	KMT
(2) Principal revolutionary forces	Proletariat	Proletariat	Proletariat, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie	Proletariat, Peasants peasants, petty bourgeoisie	Proletariat, Peasants peasants, petty bourgeoisie
II. The strategy	Revolution from below	Revolution from below and, secondarily, from above	Revolution from above, and, secondarily, from below	Revolution from below	Revolution from below
(1) Relationship with KMT	Independent development	United front	Coalition	Independent development under KMT banner	Anti-KMT
(2) Mass movements	Worker movement	Worker movement	Worker and peasant movements	Worker and peasant movements	Peasant movement
(3) Agrarian program	Rent reduction	Rent reduction	Rent reduction and partial redistribution	Partial redistribution	Land redistribution
Arming the peasants	Not specified	Not specified	Limited arming	Arm the peasants	Arm the peasants
Rural peasant power	Not specified	Not specified	Peasant committee	Peasant leadership	Peasant leadership

Table 6 (continued)

	CCP First Congress 1921	CCP Second Congress 1922	CCP-KMT Alliance 1924-1927	Emergency Conference 1927	Mao 1927-1928
(4) Military power	Not specified	Not specified	Infiltration and control of KMT army	Direct control of some KMT troops	Independent organized military force
(5) Formation of soviets	Not specified	Not specified	No soviets	No soviets	Established soviets
(6) Method of seizing power	Not specified	Not specified	Control and eventually take over KMT	Rural and urban uprising	Protracted armed struggle

to the Party leaders. They had gained valuable experience in the technique of organization, administration, and political subversion. Indeed, it was mainly the success of the Communist Party in maneuvering the KMT leadership in early 1926 that split the monolithic KMT. The leaders also began to realize the importance of organized military force and mass participation as distinguished from political struggle. But they had not yet learned to build their own army, much less the art of war, nor how to harness the mass discontent. Land reform had no role in their program except as a slogan.

In terms of the growth of the Party, the Communist movement of 1921-1927 was a qualified success. The Party grew from less than a hundred members in 1921 to 58,000 in April 1927, just before the "purification" by Chiang on April 12, 1927.¹ The anti-Communist coup had taken a heavy toll. About 18,000 Communists were killed or defected during April 1927 to June 1928, leaving about 40,000 to continue with the struggle.

Perhaps more accurately, the Communist movement of the 1920s can be described as an experiment that failed. The policy on trial was the Comintern's coalition policy. The failure was reflected in the almost complete loss of the area and population under the direct influence of the Party. By the end of 1927, the Communist Party stood virtually alone without any power base. The Party and the Comintern had attributed the collapse of the Communist movement mainly to Ch'en Tu-hsiu's failure to carry out the instructions of the Comintern.² The implication is that Ch'en had deviated from the Comintern line, and that the Comintern had a feasible strategy to begin with. However, the available evidence does not corroborate either proposition.

To be sure, there were serious disputes between the Soviet and Chinese leaders over a number of issues. The most fundamental disagreement was perhaps over the immediate goal of the CCP. The Chinese

¹See Table 1.

²CCP, "Resolution on Certain Problems of History," in Selected Works, III (Chinese edition), p. 956; CCP, "A Circular Letter to All Party Members," in Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 445-474; CCP, "Political Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress," in Brandt *et al.*, 1966, p. 136.

leaders were primarily concerned with the growth of the Party's political strength and the eventual seizure of power. To them, an alliance with the KMT was but one, and not necessarily the optimum, path to power. If an alliance was to be formed, it would be to the interest of the Party to place it on a partnership basis. And if the alliance proved infeasible, the Party should not hesitate to part with the KMT.

The Soviet leaders, however, viewed the Chinese revolution not only as part of the world Communist movement but also as a major political event that had direct bearing on Soviet interests in the Far East. Moscow wanted above all a strong ally in China that would stand up against Japan and Britain. Like any greater power that aspires to exert her influence directly on the power struggle of underdeveloped areas, the Soviet leaders faced the question of whether to support the established power group or to build up the infant political force that was ideologically closer to the Soviet Union. In the present case, the Soviet leaders decided to take the former course while holding onto the latter. In principle, the strategy was a simple two-stage plan. At the first stage, Moscow would throw its entire support behind the KMT. With Soviet technical aid and military equipment the KMT army would unite China. At the same time, the Chinese Communists would grow in strength by organizing mass movements and infiltrating the KMT leadership. At the second stage, the CCP would then seize power from the KMT. An essential condition for this strategy to work was continued collaboration of the KMT and the CCP at the initial stage, even if the CCP had to play the role of an assistant instead of a partner. Thus preservation of the alliance at all costs became the unwavering guideline for Comintern policies during the crucial years 1924-1927. It also severely restricted the maneuverability of the CCP. Yet, a comparison of the ECCI theses with the Communist programs shows that by and large the Communist leaders had followed faithfully the Comintern instructions. The responsibility for the failure of the Communist movement seemed to lie as much with the Comintern as with the CCP, for the Comintern strategy was not without major shortcomings.

First, there was the basic contradiction in its policy to support the KMT on the one hand, and in its instruction to the CCP to seize control of the KMT on the other. The Kremlin spared no effort in building up the military strength of the KMT on the assumption that the KMT could always control the army so that by controlling the KMT the Communist Party would automatically take over its military power also. The split of the KMT into the military and political forces and the strong anti-Communist attitude of the military left both the KMT and the CCP without a solid military base. Thus, even though the CCP was highly successful in infiltrating into the power hierarchy of the KMT in 1926 and early 1927, the revolution from above was in effect totally abortive.

The second major weakness of the Comintern strategy was its failure to recognize the contradiction between the revolution from above and revolution from below during the Wuhan period. The contradiction arose because the revolution from above required continued cooperation of the two parties while the agrarian revolution from below tended to undermine it. Most of the army officers under the Wuhan Government were related to the landowners in Hunan and Hupeh where the peasants were engaged in a bitter struggle against the landed gentry. When faced with the choice between preserving the alliance and pushing ahead with the agrarian revolution, Stalin insisted on the former. The CCP therefore had to moderate the forces in the villages that were to become their basic source of power. Stalin assumed that the Party had control over the peasantry. What happened was that the peasant movement was largely a spontaneous development. Despite repeated orders to curb the peasants, the torrential movement continued.¹ Eventually it led to the revolt of the army that put an end to the two-party collaboration.

Mainly because of the shortcomings of the Comintern strategy, the CCP had no real power base other than the party organization itself. It had no army of its own. Nor were the peasants and workers solidly

¹ For some of the orders issued by the Wuhan Government, see Kuomintang, 1964, pp. 311-315.

behind the Party. Up to the time of the coup of March 20, 1926, the CCP had totally neglected the army as an independent source of power. The Party's helplessness before the onslaught of the army must have made the leaders keenly aware of the need to develop their own military force. Immediately after the coup, the Party sent P'eng Shu-chih to Canton to consult with Borodin on a plan to arm the peasants in Kwang-tung with 5,000 rifles.¹ The request was turned down by Borodin on the grounds that the armed peasants could not fight against the war-lord or participate in the Northern Expedition, but that it would only incite hostility between the KMT and the peasants. The refusal to arm the Communists was not due to Stalin's oversight of the army as such. On the contrary, Stalin had emphatically pointed out that the basic nature of the struggle in China was armed revolution against armed counter-revolution.² But Stalin's plan had no place for a Communist Party with its independent army. The Soviet policy was to build up the military strength of the KMT. After the coup of March 20, 1926, Stalin made no change in his basic position. He instructed the CCP to intensify their political work in the army and to advance themselves toward leading posts in the revolutionary army.³ Even after the Communists succeeded in arming some of the workers in Shanghai, they were ordered by the Comintern to hide the weapons so as to avoid any clash with Chiang and the foreign powers.⁴ Only at the very last moment, six weeks before the formal rupture of relations between the two parties, did Stalin order the formation of a new army, and even then the army was to carry the banner of the KMT.

Toward the end of this period, Mao was evidently convinced of the crucial role of an independent, organized military force.⁵ In

¹ Ch'en, 1929, p. 430.

² Stalin, "On the Chinese Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution and the Peasant Question," in Eudin and North, 1957, p. 352.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ch'en, 1929, p. 431.

⁵ For Mao's militarism during this period see Stuart R. Schram, "The Military Deviation of Mao Tse-tung," Problems of Communism, XIII:1, January-February 1964, pp. 49-56.

directing the Autumn Crop Uprising, Mao deliberately deviated from the Central Committee's instructions.¹ He organized his own forces and relied heavily on his small army instead of on the peasants. After the uprising failed he held onto his remaining troops. In so doing, he not only departed from the Comintern strategy but also abandoned his early plan based on widespread uprising in the villages. Apparently he had come to the conclusion that the proper role of mass movement was to arouse mass participation and mass support of the army and the Party. But it could not perform the task of the army, which was to seize power and hold it. "Power grows out of the barrel of a gun."² "Unless we have regular armed forces of adequate strength, even though we have won the mass support of the workers and peasants, we certainly cannot create an independent regime, let alone a regime that lasts long and develops daily."³

Perhaps an equally significant lesson from the experience of the 1920s was that the military power could not be independent of the Party. Accordingly, when Mao reorganized his troops after the defeat in Hunan, he immediately established the system of party representatives in the army, not only to provide ideological training to the troops but also to maintain party control.⁴ In his own words some years later, "our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun will never be allowed to command the Party."⁵

But the Party and the gun were still not sufficient to bring forth a revolution. What distinguished the warlord from the KMT was that the warlord represented a military force by itself and for itself,

¹For a discussion over whether Mao deviated to the right or to the left, see K. A. Wittfogel, "The Legend of Maoism," China Quarterly, No. 2, April-June 1960, pp. 16-34; and Stuart R. Schram, "On the Nature of Mao-Tse-tung's Deviation in 1927," China Quarterly, No. 18 April-June 1964, pp. 55-66.

²Selected Works, II, p. 272.

³Selected Works, I, pp. 66-67.

⁴Ho, 1959, pp. 184-185.

⁵Selected Works, II, p. 272. In effect, Mao was admitting that power can derive from doctrinal, personal, or organizational factors, and he recognized the need to harness the military with such devices.

whereas the KMT had both an army and a disciplined party based on Sun Yat-sen's ideology. What must distinguish the CCP from the KMT was that the CCP not only should have a well-disciplined party and an army but also solid support from the masses. By the masses Mao was referring primarily to the peasantry.¹ Whether or not Mao was the originator of the peasant revolution thesis is an unsettled question being debated by various sinologists.² But whatever the case may be, it seems fair to say that Mao saw the need for a new approach more clearly than others and devoted himself to this cause with greater ardor and persistence. What was new in Mao's approach was not merely slogans for agrarian revolution nor even programs for peasant movement. Such slogans were not lacking in the Comintern instructions, and peasant movements had in fact developed with the blessing and support of the KMT. Mao's real contribution was to link together the peasant movement with party leadership and armed struggle.

Two painful experiences in this area pointed to the need for such a synthesis. The first was that, quite contrary to the general impression, the peasant movement had never been an integral part of the Communist movement. On the one hand, the Central Committee's contribution to the peasant movement was mainly limited to the training and dispatching of a small number of cadres to organize the movement. By and large, the peasant movement, especially at the later stage of its development, was a spontaneous development.³ On the other hand, few peasants had been absorbed into the Party, let alone into its higher

¹Ch'en Po-ta, Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese Revolution, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1963, p. 22.

²K. A. Wittfogel, "The Legend of Maoism," China Quarterly, Nos. 1, 2, 4, pp. 72-86, 16-31, 88-96. Benjamin Schwartz, "The Legend of the 'Legend of Maoism,'" China Quarterly, No. 2, April-June 1960, pp. 35-42; Schwartz, 1951.

³In its circular letter to all party members on August 7, 1927, the Central Committee remarked: "The peasant movement in Hunan, which had turned into a powerful agrarian revolution, and the revolt of the peasant masses in other provinces against the landlords and gentry were not directed nor guided by the Central Committee, but were carried out against its orders and directives. In general, these movements were only initiated by the lower strata of the masses themselves." Brandt et al., 1966, p. 110.

hierarchy.¹ Consequently, the peasantry as a power base of the Party was largely an illusion. At the most critical moment when the Party called upon the peasants in Hunan and Hupeh to rise in revolt, the anticipated widespread uprising never materialized.

A major factor underlying the gap between the peasant movement and the Communist movement was the Party's failure to throw its full support behind the peasants. Land ownership and the local power structure were so intertwined that it would be impossible to change one without changing the other. When the Wuhan regime, backed by the army, demanded a halt to the peasant movements in support of the landed gentry, the CCP, at the insistence of Moscow, had to sacrifice the peasants and in turn unwittingly sacrificed the Communist movement itself. The lesson was that in any revolutionary strategy, the army and the peasants must be mutually supporting rather than antagonistic. In Mao's scheme, the Party was the organization to perform the synthesis, and land reform was the major tactic to weld together the interests of the army and the peasants.² In return for land redistributed by the Party, the peasants would supply the resources and the manpower needed for the revolutionary war. The troops, drawn largely from the peasantry, would fight to protect their own land.

Such are some of the rudiments of Mao's strategy that emerged from the 1920s. The strategy itself and the tactical use of land reform had yet to be tested and evolve in the process of struggle.

¹ Ts'ai, 1927, pp. 604-605.

² "Minutes of the First Meeting of the Land Commission, on April 19, 1927," quoted in Chiang, 1963, p. 284; Mao, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," Selected Works, V, p. 196.

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10. ABSTRACT The first part of a prospective 3-volume analysis of the doctrine and practice of land reform as a tactical measure, with emphasis on its relation to goals of the Chinese Communist Party, political and economic restraints in specific localities, and its effectiveness in enlisting peasant support. From 1921 to 1927, largely as a result of the collapse of the Comintern CCP-KMT coalition policy, the CCP shifted attention from the urban proletariat to the peasant as its principal ally, from revolution from above to revolution from below. And by 1928 radical agrarian reform, at least in Mao's view, became the crucial factor on which a successful revolution would depend. His strategy: confiscate public and private land, redistribute it to the poor and landless peasant, and the peasant would fight a protracted war to protect it.		11. KEY WORDS Asia China Insurgency Political Science Land Tenure